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TAKE ONE

HOLLYWOOD NEW WAVE!

ROGER CORMAN & LASZLO KOVACS

SWAMP WOMEN
A BUCKET OF BLOOD
HOUSE OF USHER
THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM
THE WILD ANGELS
THE TRIP
BLOODY MAMA
GAS!
VON RICHTHOFEN & BROWN

HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS
TARGETS
PSYCH-OUT
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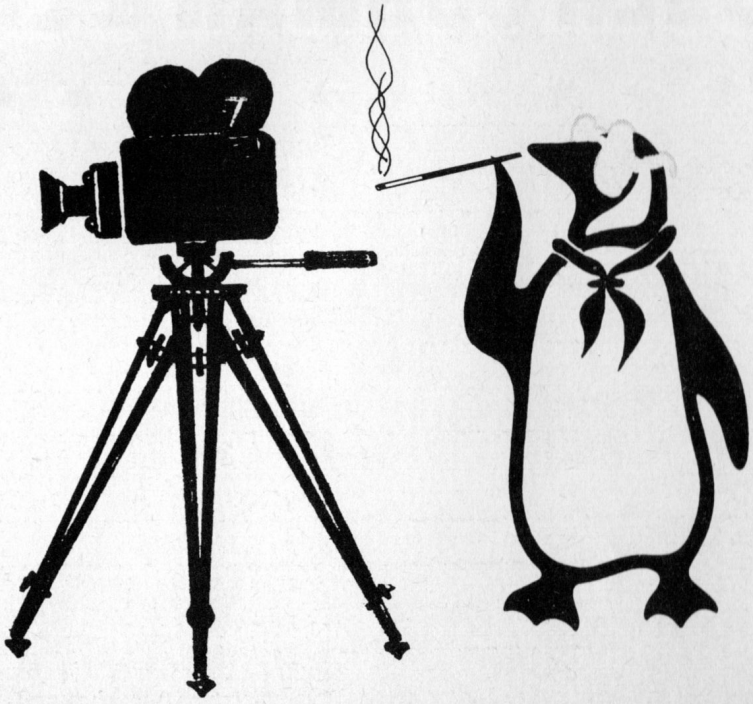

TAKE ONE

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FEED-BACK

TAKE ONE welcomes communications from its readers, but can rarely accommodate letters over 500 words in length. The editors assume that any letter received (unless otherwise stated) is free for publication.

Re: Godard and Gorin

I find Godard's comments on **Zabriskie Point** rather puzzling. His dismissal of Antonioni's film as "reactionary" seems to be shared by many left-wing viewers and critics. Usually it is attacked on the grounds that it is nothing more than a slick, commercial film full of visual clichés. I would like to demonstrate that such criticism is no more than camouflage for the real reason the film seems to have generated such antipathy among left-wing circles.

Ideologically the film exposes various forms of American individualism and declares them bankrupt. This theme is reinforced by certain images and their relationship to the central situation of the film. It begins with a political discussion from which a student walks out in disgust. This same student is later hunted for killing a cop during a demonstration. In both these incidents, the student acts contrary to the collective wishes of his political peers—student radicals. It should therefore come as no surprise that he rejects the help offered by these same radicals in his flight from the law. He steals a private plane instead and paints it with psychedelic colours. Flying on his own is his idea of freedom. Everything he does, he does *on his own*, as an autonomous individual.

The girl he meets is also an individualist and, as such, too weak to effectively resist the authority of her industrialist uncle. Instead of participating in collective revolutionary action, she is only capable of indulging in apocalyptic daydreams about the destruction of her uncle's summer lodge and all the cars, refrigerators and T.V. sets in it. Even the old cowboy she meets in a shack is what usually personifies the very essence of American individualism.

Can radical individualism cast out capitalist individualism? That would seem to be the question implied in Antonioni's American film and it is a question that many of the new breed of radicals fear to even ask.

Mario Relich
Montreal 130

I have just returned to Canada after living five years in England, and was delighted to read your fine magazine. I particularly enjoyed the Godard articles but would like to correct an error re **British Sounds.**

The voice-over in the second sequence does belong to a woman writer for an underground paper (*Black Dwarf*), but this liberated lady refused to appear nude on film. Because of my association with the Electric Cinema (an underground cinema club in London) I was asked to do the scene instead. The sound was recorded simultaneously with the other woman tucked away in a room at the top of the stairway, reading her "women's liberation texts".

Incidentally, the "bloody forearm which moves painfully across a few feet of dirt and snow to take up the red flag lying on the ground" belongs to Godard who did the scene stripped to the waist, lying in the snow at 20 degrees F. And as for the "bourgeois house"—it belongs to the producer of **British Sounds** who is also Godard's lawyer and friend. Keep laughing.

Deanne Taylor
Toronto, Ontario

I was very disappointed by your title "Dziga Vertov Notebook". It suggested that you were going to reprint the real diary of the real Dziga Vertov, one of the most depressing documents about a great film artist, pestered and finally suppressed by the socialist bureaucracy. By accepting Godard's pseudo-revolutionary terminology you are actually misinterpreting the sense of the work of the mentioned documentary filmmaker. It always seems ridiculous and somehow fishy to me when millionnaires like Godard or Lelouch discuss, preach and authoritatively decide what the revolution is. Eunuchs discussing blue movies would be an adequate comparison.

Vaclav Taborsky
Kitchener, Ontario

We go for your magazine here in Long Beach.

Would dig it somewhat more if you would cease simpering over Jean-Luc and give some of the ignored and brilliant small names the exposure they badly need.

Aaron Keene
Long Beach, Calif.

Re: "Nuclear Films"

Concerning Joe Kane's "Nuclear Films" of a few issues ago (Vol. 2, No. 6), I am sorry to report that **Cape Canaveral Monsters** is a real movie, at least by Webster's definition ("a series of pictures presented in very rapid succession"). As far as art goes, all I can say is that the classic **Bride of the Monster** is its only rival. I jotted down the name of the director just before turning it off: he is Phil Tucker. Whether this man can truly be held responsible for this atrocity can only be decided in a court of law. Perhaps you might forward the information above to the proper authorities.

Jim Walls
Annandale, Virginia

A bit late perhaps, but I've just noticed your missing-director dilemma on the sci-fi films. Maybe we can put an end to it.

This is Not a Test was directed by Fredric Gardette. The photographer is Brick Marquard, while the production and writing credits are too numerous to mention. However one of the producers credited is one James Gardette, indicating some sort of family project. Only familiar face in the cast aside from Seamon Glass and Mary Morlas (a former model) is vet character actor Thayer David.

Rest assured there is indeed a film called **Cape Canaveral Monsters.** It features Scott Peters, Linda Connell, Jason Johnson and Kay Victor.

Hope the above puts some minds at ease—I well know how frustrating such things can be. Incidentally, I've read and enjoyed TAKE ONE since the fourth issue, and hope to complete my set some day.

Don Miller
Staten Island, N.Y.

Thank you for extending my subscription. It seems a large reward for only two answers (see Vol. 2, No. 11). However, I've turned up another one. **Cape Canaveral Monsters** was on Chicago television a few weeks ago. It was directed by Phil Tucker (whose **Robot Monster** was also on TV here) and stars Scott Peters and Linda Connell. Although I didn't see all of it, it seems the monsters are lovers, and he's a male chauvinist who blames her for his mistakes. I don't know if they came from outer space or not—probably.

Any TAKE ONE reader from the Chicago area would have had a chance at many of the films on Mr. Kane's list during the past season. Two stations were competing to get the most hairy, slimy, and other crawling things onto television. But the two series (some so obscure that I doubt if even Mr. Kane has heard of them, some foreign movies reedited by American companies and retitled) included several early James Whale and Todd Browning films as well as **Murders in the Rue Morgue,** and samples from Spain, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Sweden and Germany. Most of the foreign movies had been reedited and often Anglicized—even Japanese movies turn up here with All-American cast names—so the origins of many were totally lost.

Mrs. Alan Slingo
Glenview, Illinois

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

We have a new Managing Editor, folks — Michael Goodwin. Mike will be responsible for selecting copy for publication, editing that copy, writing letters, and general editorial hassling. Under his direction, TAKE ONE will finally begin appearing at regular two-month intervals — something we've been trying to get together for years.

Mike has appeared regularly in these pages. He was *Rolling Stone*'s resident film critic (and Contributing Editor) for over a year, and writes on music, film and film makers for *Creem*, *inter/VIEW*, *Flash* and other strange publications.

But what, you may be asking yourself, does all this mean? Well, first of all, it *doesn't* mean that Peter Lebensold has been put out of the way. Peter remains Editor-In-Chief, with the authority to tell Mike to shove it if necessary. But proliferating details, increased postal rates, and various other bummers have made it difficult for Peter to handle the roles of Publisher and Editor simultaneously. Consequently, he's digging in for a serious attempt at being a Publisher, while Mike takes over most of the editorial responsibilities.

Basically, we've decided that it's time to get our shit together. TAKE ONE is a pretty good magazine, we think — but it can, and will, get a lot better. Stick around and watch the fun!

NEWS

We don't normally list new catalogs, but the **Third World Cinema Group**'s films are so interesting and different from the normal run-of-the-projector that we'd like to suggest that you contact them: GPO Box 3234, New York, NY 10001, or 2121 Browning, Berkeley, Calif. 94702. Features and shorts from Chile, Bolivia, Palestine, Puerto Rico, Colombia, etc.

For future reference, **Canada** (according to Variety) represents something like 6% of the domestic (i.e. US and Canada) motion-picture market.

And while we're into statistics, Theodore Jacobs (an executive director of Ralph Nader's Center for the Study of Responsive Law) has calculated that the average child is exposed to 350,000 **television commercials** by the time he finishes high school.

Walter Chappel (539 Charles Lane, Mill Valley, California 94941; Telephone: 415-383-0573) is one of the creators of a new 50-minute black-and-white documentary called **Yata-Hey! Alcatraz**, about the occupation of Alcatraz Island by the Indians of All Tribes. Chappell would be interested in hearing from potential distributors.

Usually reliable sources tell us that laboratories processing some of the more frank (not to say pornographic) film footage of today are doing such work only with their day crews, rather than face the good chance of freelance piracy of prints by the less fully supervised night crews.

classifieds

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Steenbeck (16/35mm) for rent. Low price. Telephone: 920-3495 (Area Code 416).

THE GROUP, Montreal, requires a late-model Steenbeck 16/35mm, must be in excellent condition. Cash purchase. Phone 514-487-5616, Bruce Wilson or Doug Lehman.

From the magazine that brought you more than you ever wanted to know about Jean-Luc Godard:

THE DEFINITIVE GROUCHO MARX

(Watch for it in our very next issue)

FESTIVALS & COMPETITIONS

The Committee of the **San Francisco Film Festival** (Short Film Division) will select approximately 23 films for presentation in the regular evening program of the Festival. No prizes, but recognition for any film selected. Entries must be no more than 30 minutes in length. Write: San Francisco International Film Festival, 1406 Bush Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94109.

The **US Television Commercials Festival** is seeking entries now, with awards to be presented November 18. Low and high-budget commercials are judged separately. Contact the Festival at: 161 East Grand Avenue, Suite 216, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Philadelphia hosts its **Third International Festival of Short Films** November 5 through 22, with cash prizes and no entry fees. Write: 1506 Summer Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102.

Still another festival of short films is being held in **Guadalajara,** Mexico November 20 through 27. Films must be less than 30 minutes in length, can be 16mm or 35mm and in any language, and must have been made since 1969. There are awards but no entry fees. Contact: International Friendship Centre, Miguel Angel de Quevedo & Manuel Acuna Streets, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

Montreal witnesses the first annual **International Festival of 16mm Cinema** October 26 through 31. Films must be in 16mm (optical or magnetic soundtrack), must have been produced since October 1st 1970 and not been previously screened in Canada, must not be merely didactic (or publicity or travelog films), and must be subtitled in either English or French. The festival is non-competitive. For more details and entry forms, write: Festival Office, Coopérative Cinéastes Indépendants, 2026 Ontario Street East, Montreal 133, Canada.

Meanwhile, Yorktown (Saskatchewan) holds its 11th **Biennial International Film Festival** October 18 through 23.

Other festivals to note on the calendar are: **Autumnal Film Festival** (c/o Associated Students, California State College at Long Beach, 6101 East Seventh Street, Long Beach, Calif. 90801; over $3000 in prizes; held late November); **Freedoms Foundation Honor Medal Awards** (c/o Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge, Pa. 19481; attn. Mrs. William Grover; for films contribution "to a greater understanding of the American way of life"; deadline early November); **National Evangelical Film Foundation Awards** (c/o Christian Youth Cinema Inc., Glenside, Pa. 19038; for any religious production; judged by a board of twelve men from twelve denominations; deadline in December); and the **Screen Producers Guild Intercollegiate Awards** (c/o Screen Producers Guild Inc., 141 El Camino Drive, Beverly Hills, Cal. 90212; for films made by faculty and students at US colleges and universities; deadline in November).

An Invitation

There's nobody around here who does anything that you can't do. Putting it another way, we'd like it if you sent us some copy. Reviews, analysis, interviews, news notes, rumors . . . the possibilities are endless. We don't pay much, but we *do* pay—on publication. Details are available on request.

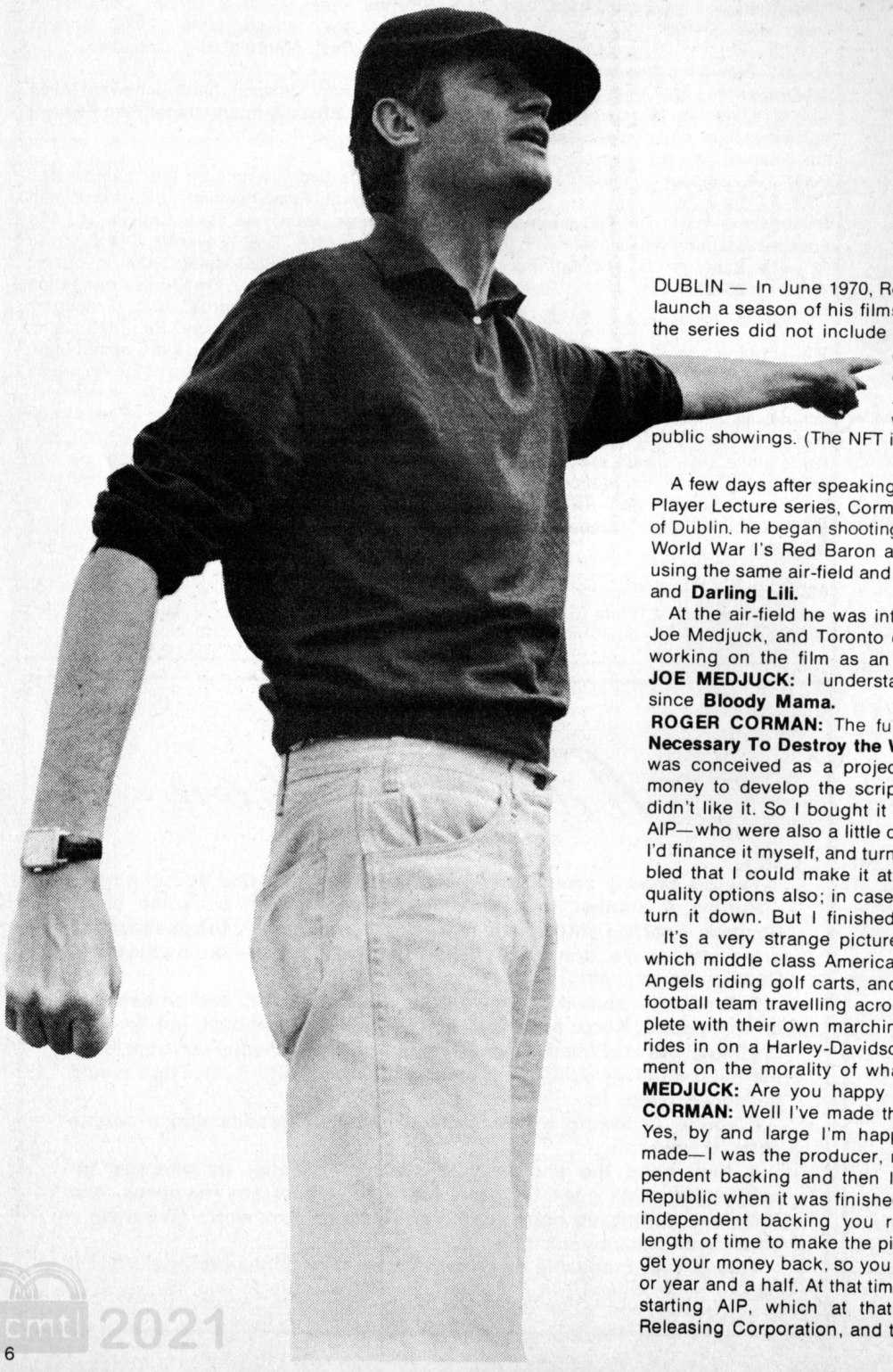
Submissions should be typewritten, double-spaced, and on one side of the paper. Keep a carbon copy—we'll do our best not to lose anything, but manuscripts have been known to disappear from even the most efficient editorial offices. A stamped, return envelope would be appreciated, too.

If you're reviewing a film, include complete credits and a couple stills, if you can.

A final note: the shorter your piece, the better its chances for publication. This goes for pros, too. Our editors are relentless, and they *love* cutting up copy—so if you're smart, you won't give them a chance to cut up *your* copy.

This is your magazine as much as ours. The pages are open. Get it on.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROGER CORMAN



DUBLIN — In June 1970, Roger Corman arrived in London to help launch a season of his films at The National Film Theatre. Though the series did not include all of the nearly 50 films Corman has directed over the past 15 years, it did include his three recent films, **The Wild Angels**, **The Trip** and **Bloody Mama**, which have been banned in England for public showings. (The NFT is considered a private club.)

A few days after speaking at the Film Theatre as part of the John Player Lecture series, Corman moved on to Ireland where, outside of Dublin, he began shooting on **Von Richthofen and Brown** (about World War I's Red Baron and the Canadian who shot him down) using the same air-field and the same planes used in **The Blue Max** and **Darling Lili.**

At the air-field he was interviewed by TAKE ONE associate editor Joe Medjuck, and Toronto correspondent Allan Collins (who was working on the film as an editor).

JOE MEDJUCK: I understand that you've finished another film since **Bloody Mama.**

ROGER CORMAN: The full title of it is **Gas-s-s! Or It Became Necessary To Destroy the World In Order to Save It.** It originally was conceived as a project for United Artists, who put up the money to develop the script, but when they saw the script they didn't like it. So I bought it back from them and made a deal with AIP—who were also a little doubtful about the script. But I said that I'd finance it myself, and turn it over to them at a given price. I gambled that I could make it at that price. And they had a couple of quality options also; in case they didn't like the picture they could turn it down. But I finished it and they liked it.

It's a very strange picture. If there's a market for a picture in which middle class American society is represented by the Hell's Angels riding golf carts, and a fascist society is represented by a football team travelling across the country in dune buggies, complete with their own marching bands, and where Edgar Allen Poe rides in on a Harley-Davidson chopper from time to time to comment on the morality of what takes place, we have that picture.

MEDJUCK: Are you happy working for AIP?

CORMAN: Well I've made this kind of deal with them before . . . Yes, by and large I'm happy with them. The second picture I made—I was the producer, not the director—I made it with independent backing and then I had offers from both Columbia and Republic when it was finished. But by that time, I realised that with independent backing you raise the money, you take a certain length of time to make the picture, and then you take more time to get your money back, so you can only make one picture every year or year and a half. At that time Jim Nicholson and Sam Arkoff were starting AIP, which at that time was called A.R.C., American Releasing Corporation, and they wanted to take my picture. I said

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that I would give them the picture if they would give me an advance against the release of the picture, and also would make a deal for a series of subsequent pictures in which they would give me advances on every one. So I could make a series of pictures, and get at least a portion of the negative costs back, and not have to go through this wait. Jim Nicholson and I went throughout the country with the film, which was **The Fast and The Furious,** showing it to the various A.R.C. franchise holders, and they went for the deal.

MEDJUCK: They shortened **Bloody Mama.** Do they normally interfere?

CORMAN: No, that was highly unusual. They do a few little things. Such as in **The Wild Angels,** they got frightened about the big orgy scene in the church and put in an insert which said "such and such funeral home," and they took out a nice long shot I had panning with the motorcycles as they came up to the church—or rather they cut into the middle of the pan to this really rotten insert. Now it's obviously a church, and the shot was slightly out of focus, over-exposed and badly composed. I felt that was kind of good, because I thought the whole thing was so ridiculous that anybody who saw it would know instantly that this had been done by an idiot.

Another time, after the English censor had turned down **The Trip,** he said that if we would have a forward to it, explaining that we were not trying to peddle LSD and talking about the evils of LSD, he would accept the picture. I said great. Let's get somebody with a huge Oxford accent to do the narration, because the picture's clearly shot in southern California and it would be obvious how and why the narration was put in when the picture shows in England. But it never happened, and the picture's never gotten by the censor.

MEDJUCK: Do you think that the English censor has something against you? **The Wild Angels** still hasn't passed but **Easy Rider** has.

CORMAN: He gave me his personal word when he banned **The Wild Angels** that he would not let any other motorcycle picture in. I said, "You're banning mine, but then all the imitators are going to come and you're going to let their pictures in, and if mine comes in in a couple of years I'm going to look like the guy who imitated them." He said, "No, I give you my word that no other picture about Hell's Angels will be allowed in England until **The Wild Angels** is allowed in." For reasons best known to himself he let a lot of very strange pictures about the Hell's Angels into England, and **The Wild Angels** is still banned.

I can understand his letting **Easy Rider** in. It's not really about Hell's Angels. The two guys in it ride Hell's Angels bikes because Peter liked the bike he'd ridden in **The Wild Angels,** but it's not about the Hell's Angels. **Easy Rider** is a source of some irritation to me because I was the original producer of **Easy Rider,** but when Peter Fonda got into an argument with Sam Arkoff the project moved over to Columbia and I lost a great deal of money, but those are the breaks of the game.

MEDJUCK: Could UA change this picture if they wanted?

CORMAN: Most distributors have clauses in the contract saying that they can make changes if they want. It's understandable—they have a great deal of money invested in the picture. On the other hand, when they use that power they tend to use it capriciously. They almost always hurt the picture. For example, **Bloody Mama** had more cuts in it than any picture I ever made for AIP, and I'm positive they hurt the picture. There are certain areas where the cutting was very ragged. They just ripped sections out. They didn't take that much out: maybe seven, eight minutes, but they hurt the picture.

MEDJUCK: Have any of your films lost money?

CORMAN: Yes. (pause) For a long time they didn't. I think the first 27 pictures I made made a profit, but the 28th didn't. Actually I didn't direct it myself. I was going so fast at the time that I didn't have time, and my assistant producer, a friend of mine, did it for Allied Artists and I went in and broke my contract. Though I'd made 27 pictures I really didn't know much about the business, and I went in and said, "I'm not going to make pictures for you guys if you're going to lose money on me." I've since lost on a couple of others, and I recognise that as the breaks of the game.

MEDJUCK: How do you always manage to bring your films in on schedule and on budget?

CORMAN: I do a great deal of planning. We plan in much more detail than any other company I know of. For example, we have this film completely story-boarded for the aerial sequences. Now we're working with a fairly low budget. As I understand it, **Darling Lili** with a 20 million dollar budget, and **The Blue Max** with, I think, a 7 million dollar budget, did not use a story-board on the basis that they did not want to waste that money. Our budget is in the neighbourhood of 1 million dollars, and renting the planes is the biggest single expenditure. We've gone for a story-board and that's a huge help. But when necessary, we dump the story-board and I think that it's a combination of tremendous planning, but being able to throw the plan. This is the first time I've ever used a story-board, but I felt that this was the only way to do the aerial footage. As I said, I can't really direct the aerial sequences but everybody has copies of the story-board and knows what we want.

MEDJUCK: What's happened to the two Westerns you backed that Monte Hellman directed, and Jack Nicholson produced and acted in?

CORMAN: Monte has bought them back from Walter Reade. It became very involved. We had given them to Walter Reade, and they never put them into theatres. They were really quite good pictures I thought. They did lack a certain vitality, and Walter Reade felt that they didn't have enough action to make it, so they sold them straight to television. Monte got someone to put up the money and he bought them back. Now *they* were very inexpensive films, and I think they're very well made.

MEDJUCK: Now that Jack Nicholson's so popular maybe that will help the films.

CORMAN: I was telling Jack, nobody rooted for him to win the Academy Award more than I did. I've got about 15 old Jack Nicholson pictures.

MEDJUCK: You've helped a lot of people to get started as directors . . .

CORMAN: Most of them have worked with me for a while: Monte was an editor, Peter Bogdanovich who did **Targets** worked on **The Wild Angels,** Daniel Haller was my art director and Francis Ford Coppola was an assistant. Bruce Clark did a little motorcycle film out of the UCLA film department called **Naked Angels** for me, and on the basis of that he's just done a film for Joe Levine, **The Ski Bum.**

MEDJUCK: You don't get a credit on the Hellman films, and I don't think you get one on **Targets** . Is there any reason for leaving your name off those films?

CORMAN: Well. the films really are their directors . and they should get the credit for them.

COLLINS: Did you work very closely with Daniel Haller on the art direction of your Poe films?

CORMAN: Yes. We would discuss the sets and Dan would kind of sketch them out on a napkin at lunch, and that would be it. When I went to 20th Century-Fox it was really a surprise: all these draftsmen, and these guys are drawing things out and the sketch artists and everything else. Dan used to walk out on the set and he'd take a piece of chalk, make a mark, and say, "Start it about here." Then he'd walk out about 15 feet and say, "Well that looks reasonable, bring it out to here." And I think he was totally correct, because they got themselves so wound up in the studio in such needless detail on sets. You know: "This wall is going to be 35 feet, 14 inches." It means nothing whatsoever in a motion picture. The set will change with every lens you use anyway. We built up a collection of sets on the Poe pictures, and one of the reasons Haller was never that accurate was that we would take standing units, and if a flat was anywhere near what we wanted, we used it. The pictures got more elaborate because we constantly added to the collection of flats with each picture, so that the building got bigger and bigger.

MEDJUCK: On **Von Richthofen and Brown** you're using four camera crews. What do you think your shooting ratio will be?

CORMAN: I never really figure in terms of ratio. This will be a huge ratio though. I think we'll shoot 20 or 30 to one on the aerials. It's the only way to do it. For instance, normally you rehearse, you go for three or four takes, and you print the take you like, or you print two takes if you want to look at two of them. Here, I've told all the cameramen to shoot the rehearsals and to print everything, on the basis that you never know. It's so tricky, especially with us using a lot of long lenses. We're using 500mm lenses in some cases. In what may not appear to be a usable shot, you might have a quick cut in it that can be used somewhere. We have a story-board, we have a script, and we know pretty much what we're doing. Yet at the same time things are going to happen. For instance, an SE5 just taxiing down the field nosed over, and we happened to have a cameraman on the plane at that moment and we have a really interesting shot.

MEDJUCK: Working with the planes you seem to have less control

NEW WORLD PICTURES

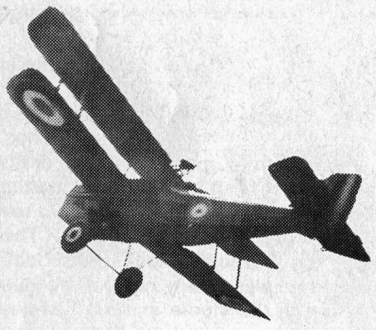
Roger Corman, once known as the King of the B-Movies, after a brief association with the major studios on **St Valentines Day Massacre, Bloody Mama,** and **Von Richthofen and Brown,** has returned to his favourite territory (in which he holds the record for the fastest B-Movie ever produced—**Little Shop of Horrors** completed in three days, and still a classic of the genre). Although he no longer directs the pictures himself, Corman closely supervises the scripting and budget and arranges distribution to drive-ins and action theatres through his own distribution company New World Pictures. The company got off to a roaring start with **The Student Nurses** produced for $140,000, and one of the top money makers of last fall's releases. The average New World production is budgeted at $100,000, on a three week shooting schedule followed by no more than eight weeks in editing up to the first answer print. This compares with the $1 million cost of the average studio production.

New World Pictures to some extent fills the gap created by American International when they became to all intents a major studio with productions like **Wuthering Heights** and **A Tale of Two Cities.** The young filmmakers whom Corman recruits, many of them working on their first feature, bring great enthusiasm and creativity to their work, and in return for minimum salaries acquire extensive responsibility and experience in the commercial cinema. Many go on to become independantly successful directors, like Bruce Clark who directed **Naked Angels** for New World Pictures while still a student at UCLA. (Among the five Corman-sponsored productions recently completed is **Angels, Hard as They Come,** a savage bike picture co-written and produced by TAKE ONE'S one-time London correspondent Jonathan Demme. Making her screen debut in a cameo role is Sharon Peckinpah, daughter of the director of **The Wild Bunch**.)

Allan Collins

VON RICHTHOFEN AND BROWN

A Corman Company Production. 1971. Deluxe Color. 97 min. Director: Roger Corman. Producer: Gene Corman. Screenplay: John and Joyce Corrington. Photography: Michael Reed. Music: Hugo Friedhofer. Art Director: Jim Murakami. Cast: John Philip Law, Don Stroud, Barry Primus, Karen Huston, Corin Redgrave. A United Artists release.



With **The Wild Angels,** Roger Corman had come to a dead end in his treatment of essentially metaphysical questions. Since then his films have been pointless and disappointing in their lack of content and arbitrariness. But with **Von Richthofen and Brown**, Corman again takes up an essentially moral question, and the result is a truly noble film, the best he has ever made.

There are apparently two sides to this moral question, but, characteristically, Corman does not take sides. He does take a strong anti-war stand, but the real question concerns the way in which the war is conducted. Corman's conflict is between Consciousness I (represented by Von Richthofen) and Consciousness II (represented by Brown), with Consciousness II the inevitable winner. Thus, there is a fatalism to the film, and what we are presented with is a lesson in the *process* of change. Roger Corman has become an historian!

This is an analytical film, and a film of great formal beauty. There is nothing arbitrary to the narrative (as in **The Trip** and **Gas-s-s!**) and nothing decadent in the treatment (as in **Bloody Mama** and **The St. Valentine's Day Massacre**). Corman skillfully manipulates his film (and the audience) to guide us through a process of changing moralities.

At the outset of the film, the cavalier attitude of Von Richthofen toward war seems coldly decadent. Like the hunt, war is a nobleman's sport; and Von Richthofen drives onto a battlefield to observe the wreck of the first plane he has shot down. With no apparent human regard, he lifts the goggles from the dead man's face and stares at the eyes of his prey. Then he cuts the insignia from the downed plane as a souvenir.

On the British side is Brown, who rejects the idea of a gentlemen's war and sees only the cold facts of death and killing. His is a bitterly pragmatic viewpoint, and at the beginning of the war his viewpoint is distasteful both to the British and to the Germans. By the end of the war, when the idea of a gentlemen's war is no longer supportable, this apparent victory of rationality is no victory at all. We have been shown the death of something noble and the birth of something barbaric. Corman has managed to make us sympathetic with both sides—one doomed to perish, the other doomed to survive. History has no glorious victory; change is inevitable and relentless.

Both Brown and Von Richthofen understand their roles and face the changes without emotion. Fatalism rules out emotion. Asked if he expects to live forever, Von Richthofen explains that every moment in his plane is forever. Faced with the suggestion that everyone has to die sometime, Brown retorts, "We're dead already." Von Richthofen prefers to die with the death of a tradition that has been his life. Brown realizes that he must live with a tradition which, lacking humanism, is as empty as death.

Brown initiates new methods of combat in which the flyer employs the methods of the predator. Von Richthofen refuses to let his men fight as "assassins." His finest moment (or most ridiculous folly) is his decision to reject camouflage and paint his airplanes in flamboyant colors so the enemy can see them coming. But history works against both sides, and both are helpless in preventing an inexorable escalation of predatory acts. By the end, a German draftee openly worries about the color of his plane; and Brown himself is upset when the entrance of the Americans into the war guarantees the slaughter of a lopsided victory. There is no victory for the liberal.

Never before has Corman made his distaste for the paradoxical inhumanity of liberalism so clear. Liberalism is the politic of necessity, never of free choice. It precludes any absolute morality and embraces its own inherent dilemma. On the other hand, Corman has always had an affection for the aristocratic world view, but has seemed (rightfully) embarrassed by this interest. Vincent Price, in the Poe pictures, always had noble intentions, but was hopelessly doomed by his own decadence. Von Richthofen, similarly, is doomed in his outdated nobility; but now Corman understands the process by which he is doomed.

Only once in the film are we given a glimpse of hand-to-hand trench combat, and this scene shocks us back into the recognition that this *is* war, ruthless and predatory. This scene marks the turning point in the moral progression of the film. Earlier air fighting scenes had a beautiful dream-like quality to them, staged in a huge expanse of sky over endless green fields. By the end of the film the air battles have become as terrifying as the trench combat; Corman intercuts between Von Richthofen's final glide to earth, and the brutal events that will follow his death. Von Richthofen's death is a wistful farewell to the nobility of the individual in war.

When the camera moves in for a final close-up of Von Richthofen dead in his cockpit, we realize that the formality of Corman's camera movements create this pervading sense of fatalism. Usually a fluid camera implies a spatial continuum and a sense of freedom in the movement of the characters. But Corman's camera does not follow his actors—it pursues them. The actors are walking strict chalk-marked patterns to comply with pre-arranged camera movements. They are acting out roles which destiny (and Corman's camera) have dictated.

John H. Dorr

John Dorr is a filmmaker and free-lance writer living in Hollywood. He is currently working on the crew of **The Second Coming,** *a Hitchcockian horror movie being directed by Willard Huyck.*

than usual . . .

CORMAN: I have almost no control. This is rather like when I did **The Young Racers** with Grand Prix cars. There's no possible way that I can direct a pilot or a group of pilots or a group of race-car drivers. I can talk to them; Jimmy Murakami, the art director—he goes up in the helicopter—briefs one section, I brief another, and we try to coordinate it. But in the last analysis it is up to the pilots and I'm not even trying to give them specific things. I give them a general idea of what we want, and then ask them for suggestions on how to get it. A lot of it must come from the pilots.

MEDJUCK: Is there a particular reason for shooting the aerial footage first—before your actors are here?

CORMAN: The reason is this: Since the aerial footage is very chancy, I want to have it cut together before I come to the individual shots of the people in the planes. So that we shoot the close-ups to match the aerial footage. When the aerial shooting is finished I'll only use one camera crew, with perhaps another one standing by.

MEDJUCK: Who did the script for the film?

CORMAN: John William Corrington, a novelist from New Orleans who'd never written a script before. I had become somewhat upset about the Hollywood screen writers. I felt that I was just not getting what I wanted. And I read a novel of Bill Corrington's called "The Upper Hand," which I liked very much and which had one sequence in it about pilots, about crop dusters and barn stormers. I felt that he had a feeling for aviation, for what made a pilot a pilot. So I just called him. It said on the jacket of the book that he was a professor at Loyola University in New Orleans.

MEDJUCK: Did you have a basic plot when you contacted him?

CORMAN: Actually I've had this idea for many years. About five, six years ago Fox called me and asked me if I had any ideas. I went over to talk to them. They said they wanted to do a big budget picture and I offered them two. This one and **The St. Valentine's Day Massacre,** and they didn't want to do Von Richthofen because they'd just bought a book called "The Blue Max." At that time it was just about Von Richthofen, but when I gave the idea to United Artists they asked for more in it, so I added the character of Brown.

MEDJUCK: Were you happy working with Fox and with **The St. Valentine's Day Massacre**?

CORMAN: Reasonably so. In the actual production they left me fairly well alone. In the cutting they asked for one or two things that I didn't agree with, but it was minor. It wasn't beyond what you're usually bothered with. The only area in which I felt I was hurt was casting. The casting wasn't at all what I had in mind. I wanted a very distinguished cast for a gangster film. The cast I wanted was Orson Welles as Al Capone and Jason Robards as Bugs Moran. They agreed to Robards, but they said that Welles would never play Capone and he was impossible to deal with. Anyway . . . I later met Welles, and he said in that big booming voice (Corman here imitates Welles), "I would have been delighted to play Al Capone." Also, some of the supporting players were contract players whom I wasn't happy with.

MEDJUCK: What particularly interested you in the Von Richthofen and Brown story?

CORMAN: I started with Von Richthofen. And I started on the basis that he essentially, for my purposes, was the last of the knights. The First World War, and particularly aerial combat, was a transitional period. It was the end of knighthood, the end of the individual. It was already there on the ground—I think it originally started with the American Civil War. The vast number of men who just poured across the ground with tremendous casualties. It was a real shock to the European military observers. They'd never seen a war like this, and they thought there was something wrong with the American commanders. Robert E. Lee, the great general of the South, defended Richmond with a series of trenches, and it developed into very vicious trench warfare.

Now, the same thing happened in Europe a little later, 1914-18, with the same results: enormous loses. Just a dirty, rotten war with great losses. Most wars move that way now: nobody knows heroes anymore. I know of no legendary heroes out of World War II, or out of the Korean War, or Vietnam. All you have is villains—either villains or nameless men. And I think the last of the heroes were the pilots in the First World War; by the Second World War they had become faceless men as well. And I wanted to talk about the end of this era and one man who was the last of his kind. Von Richthofen is the ideal man to demonstrate it: he's the most famous, he had the highest number of kills, and, what is extremely interesting, the man who replaced him as commander of the squadron when he was killed was Hermann Goering.

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The great Canadian Cable rip-off

by Jim Farrell

Cassette VTR, EVR, wall screens, video-phones and home retrieval units are only a part of the full electronic life. But as the gadgets of next year get more and more attention, the fundamental communications problems of the present are often overlooked.

Of the already existing communications systems, cable television has perhaps the greatest potential for immediate development—but *by* whom and *for* whom? That's another matter!

The background noise you hear is the hungry howl of broadcasters, publishers, bureaucrats and speculators, who see the future of cable as yet another scheme for turning thin air into money—and promising monopolistic conditions as well. Naturally, they all want control of it—they read McLuhan like everyone else. The public, shielded from the serious implications of this struggle by the complexity of the technocratic tangle, is left to its conception of cable television as a panacea to boredom or (for Canadians) a convenient way to avoid "Canadian content."

That's what makes a television experiment in Thunder Bay, Ontario unique—the fact that it put the average citizen not only in front of the camera but behind it as well. Much of the credit for the project belongs to the National Film Board's ongoing social program, "Challenge for Change". The main purpose of "Challenge for Change" is to promote "constructive change" through the popular use of communications. This means employing the NFB's substantial resources to de-mythologize, decentralize and democratize the media.

Perhaps best known among the program's various undertakings is the Newfoundland Project, a two-month experiment on remote Fogo Island in which film served as a catalyst for self-awareness and community action. Unofficial reports suggest that the Board was finally forced to pull out when their work began to show embarassingly good results; public awareness became uncomfortably high for provincial politicians as the people used media to press some longstanding grievances. A number of films remain as proof of that pioneering effort: **The Things I Cannot Change** (1966), **Pikangikum** (1967), **The Ballad Of Crowfoot** (1968), **Up Against The System** (1969) and **Occupation** (1970), to name a few.

The Thunder Bay Project represented the program's first extension into local television broadcasting . . . an extension made possible through the cooperation of a local citizens' group called "Town Talk," which had already sponsored a lively TV debate series over the local CBC affiliate. When a program on the role and responsibility of the media was proposed, the series was promptly cancelled.

"Town Talk" member David Hughes had also been Colin Low's location manager for Expo's **Labyrinth**, and a participant in the Fogo Island Affair; so his suggestion to Low (now the "Challenge for Change" executive producer) for a cable experiment in Thunder Bay met with more than casual interest.

The city, a relatively isolated community of 100,000, was a perfect choice. Over 80% of homes in Thunder Bay have cable service, and the phone company (along whose lines cable is run) is municipally owned and operated.

Before long, the NFB was pouring equipment and personnel into the area. The idea was to train about a dozen locals in 16mm film and television production. These core people would then serve as instructors and consultants for the community at large, and the resulting programs would be shown weekly on a cable channel. The consultants' aim was to become obsolete, to promote independent local production and let the community run things without professional hindrance.

Before any of these things could happen, of course, there had to be long hours of training. Some of us had previous experience in amateur film-making and educational TV, while others began fresh; but we all had a lot to learn. Somehow at summer's end (in record Film Board time) there were two films cut and ready to be flown to Montreal for mixing and printing. . . . **And A Broom Factory** was a 13-minute portrait of a Thunder Bay super-sports family that thrives on hockey, broomball, tennis, baseball, water-skiing, stock-car racing and . . . broom-making. **The Superior Scrapbook**, a 20-minute photo-animation effort (made without an animation stand) capitalized on a cache of old glass negatives to recreate the history of the Lakehead's work, whiskey and wicked women.

From start to finish they were local productions—project people scripted, shot, edited and followed them to the lab to supervise completion. For better or worse they were ours.

In the fall we moved from film to television, and our 16mm location experience proved most valuable to the new video style. The best aspect of portable VTR is the lack of established procedures. Until more individuals could be involved and trained, responsibility for three hours of weekly programming fell to the six of us who made up the full-time staff of Thunder Bay Community Programs.

We soon learned to distrust the criticism of sceptics who claimed that good programming ideas would be hard to come by. Each taping session involved more people, and each of them had ideas for what they'd like to see. Almost any location was a possible site for a program.

In Nipigon (about 70 miles east along the Lake Superior shore) we interviewed a resident poet whose photos and recollections dated back to the days when he traded goods to the Indians for Treaty Pay. A tiny Thunder Bay nightspot featured a country-and-western singer whose 162-consecutive-week engagement made him a local legend. Portable equipment allowed a crew of two to tape an interview with him inside the bus that served as his mobile home/recording studio, and one of his regular performances.

True, portable equipment has been used before, but usually for abstract, aesthetic purposes (as in New York's "Video-Freex", or Sausalito's "Ant Farm"). Never before had there been such sustained experimentation with using the VTR hardware for "straight" broadcasting. Confronted by essentially new problems, our crews found themselves forced to find very individual solutions.

In another (nearly simultaneous) project in Normandin, Quebec, "Challenge for Change" was proving that even the smallest communities could make profitable use of cable. We took time from our production schedule to watch some of the tape they had done. It was decidedly more informal (Normandin's cable system serves about 300 families); and we all admired that. The tape showed a meeting, and in the midst of a speaker's statement a young girl interrupted from a stairway. Everyone (including the cameraman) turned to her. "Someone is on the phone upstairs," she called. "They've got a question about what you just said." It will be a long time before I see a better example of instantaneous feedback!

A good part of our work in Thunder Bay was devoted to a

proposal to City Council for a charter board (broadly representative of the community) whose job it would be to "watch-dog" the community channel and act as arbiter in any sensitive cases. It was also recommended that, since the agreement under which cable operated in the city was up for renewal, the Council establish cable as a municipal service with guaranteed access for all citizens.

It goes without saying that, in the end, the councillors paid lip-service to the "advisability" of community cable programming, and watched calmly as the system was sold to Maclean-Hunter, Ltd., one of Canada's largest print and cable corporations. At another hearing, the Canadian Radio-Television Commission listened with great interest to various local objections to the Thunder Bay sale, and then (in a record nine days) approved the take-over.

Relations with the new cable operators grew more and more troubled. One night Maclean-Hunter found it "necessary" to lock our technicians in (and out of) their studio. This meant that each time one of us needed to return to our production centre (about 2 blocks away), we had to ask to be let out. Then a guest for a live program was unable to get in, leaving us with 15 minutes of dead air, and the distinct impression that the management was squeezing. Our suspicions were confirmed when the corporation imposed a restriction on all live programming, and insisted that our taped material be listed with them three weeks in advance of the show date.

Of course, the broadcasters' motives are fairly clear. Popular involvement in what was once their exclusive domain does not sit well with many of them. There may even be a note of envy, for by reason of a kind of technological accident, new equipment and new techniques have fallen into the hands of amateurs even before they were adequately tested by professionals. As a result, Thunder Bay community groups had at their command an impressively flexible set of communication tools . . . and not only the tools but a medium through which to use them.

The whole process was proper "vulgarization"; only the predicted lowering of quality did not materialize. Groups and individuals made programs on subjects that interested them—for themselves and for anyone else who cared to watch. With no ratings and no commercial sponsorship, true community programming was free to develop as a minority medium.

The people our consultants trained generally took from 15 minutes to an hour to get the hang of video-recording. After little more than a day of practice, they were bringing back material suitable for broadcast, and within weeks they were suggesting and realizing their own program ideas with assistance only at the editing stage. Their enthusiasm reinforced our own; and when finances became scarce, "Town Talk" supporters and instructors pieced together what was needed to keep things going. But efforts to overcome hardships proved fruitless in the face of establishment opposition; and after six months of successful operation, Thunder Bay Community Programs reluctantly became a bit of media history.

More than once we have asked ourselves why community video production isn't happening in more places; time and again we have returned to the same basic answers:

1. Locally-controlled TV production is not in the interests of the cable operator, whose profit drive will tolerate no "unnecessary" diversion of money, and whose business ethics will not allow the notion that community service ought to be proportional to community exploitation;

2. Locally-controlled production is not in the interests of professional broadcasters, whose art and livelihood are threatened by media "vulgarization";

3. Locally-controlled production is certainly not in the interests of politicians, whose control of information is, at best, tenuous in the present state of affairs, and who cannot tolerate the radical decentralization of communications.

Today in Thunder Bay you can still gain access to cable television. Gather a group around you, for respectability's sake. Make an appointment for studio time to tape your program (at last check, there was a three-month wait). Arrange your material so it can be said and shown in a 15-x-15 ft. area. And hope that the secretaries (who have replaced Maclean-Hunter's regular cameramen) are as good behind the equipment as they look.

But despite the gloomy side, there are people who have had a taste of what television can be. They know that it's possible to *make* it as well as watch it; and they'll never be the same again. One thing is certain though: if the community wants access to the media, it's going to have to fight for it!

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Laszlo Kovacs is a cinematographer, and one of the men behind a revolution.

The revolution is happening in Hollywood, and it doesn't have a name yet. It started with a couple of low-budget motorcycle films, **Hells Angels On Wheels** and **The Savage Seven,** directed by Richard Rush in 1967 and 1968. Laszlo photographed them. It achieved a high level of cinematic art with **Targets,** a masterful first-film by Peter Bogdanovich. Laszlo shot it. It came to public light in 1969 with Dennis Hopper's **Easy Rider**--cinematography by L. Kovacs. Hopper's as-yet-unreleased **Last Movie** promises to be even better, and Laszlo shot it. Bob Rafelson's **Five Easy Pieces,** this year's "best American movie," according to many critics, lists Laszlo Kovacs as Director of Photography. It's not hard to perceive a pattern.

It's harder to find a name for the thing; perhaps "Hollywood New Wave" will do for the moment. The term "New Wave" has been over-used, but the fact of the matter is that the rash of high-quality, low-budget independent productions that have begun to come from Hollywood have more than a little in common with the films that defined the French Nouvelle Vague in the late 50's and early 60's. Now, as then, the New Wave films are being made by a small, interrelated group of innovative film makers, working with light-weight equipment, small crews, and comparatively low budgets. Now, as then, they take their films very seriously.

There's nothing unusual about low-budget films—Hollywood has been turning out "B-movies" for years. But the New Wave film makers refuse to settle for "B" status. One of the key factors in their not-infrequent success is the existence of a group of extremely talented motion picture technicians who grew up with the Hollywood renaissance at the same time they were creating it. The group includes Richard Rush, Peter Bogdanovich, Dennis Hopper, Jack Nicholson, Monte Hellman and Paul Lewis.

And Laszlo Kovacs, right at the heart of it. A 37-year-old Hungarian refugee, Laszlo has photographed most of the important American films made in the last four years. That many of these films are still relatively obscure doesn't change a thing; audiences, as well as studio heads, had to be educated to the point where they could see that something was happening, even if they didn't (and still don't) know what it was. Laszlo and his friends know. Dennis Hopper puts it very succinctly: "We're out to save the American film industry."

But in any production, large-scale or small, studio or independent, the cameraman remains the key technician on the movie set. The director may have visualized the film brilliantly, the actors may be giving the performances of their careers, the script may be the best thing since **Red River**--but if there's no image on the film, everyone might as well have gone to the beach. The cameraman is responsible for there being an image on the film.

His responsibility can be broken down into several large areas: exposure, framing, camera operation, lighting, and focus. Exposure involves walking around with a light meter to determine how much light is falling on various parts of the set, and adjusting the lens aperture accordingly. Framing means that the actors should be visible and the prop man should not. Camera operation involves making sure that the camera--a complicated machine--is running properly, and fixing it if it's not. Lighting may be the most subtle of all the areas of responsibility, for a set can be lit correctly exposure-wise and still look terrible. The cameraman must arrange the lights so the lighting appears natural, as well as providing enough light to shoot. Focus involves determining the depth of field, and allows the cameraman to emphasize or de-emphasize objects or people in the frame.

In addition to these purely technical responsibilities, a cameraman must work quickly, efficiently and unflappably.

If a bad cinematographer makes a mistake, it can render a shot completely unusable. The worst part of such an occurrence is that, frequently, there's no way of knowing that the shot is unusable until the film has been processed and by that time the set may be torn down, the actors may be unavailable, or the entire company may be hundreds of miles away. This is the stuff that producers' nightmares are made of. Still, bad cinematographers are rare; competent ones are the rule, and most of the time there's an image on the film.

Laszlo Kovacs is more than competent. Technically proficient, he is basically an artist who uses his technique in the interests of his art. Unfortunately for purposes of explication, cinematographic art is so closely tied to technical operations that often it's hard to perceive until the shot is projected; on set, a bad or merely competent cameraman looks and acts much the same as a great one. All cameramen play with the lights, adjust the lens, take exposure readings, and look through the camera viewfinder. But when the film has been run past the lens, processed and projected, certain criteria can be evaluated.

Watch Laszlo on location in Peru. He is shooting Hopper's **Last Movie,** in the square of an Indian pueblo some 14,000 feet high in the Andes. After nearly an hour of setting up (during which time Laszlo has been walking around with his light meter, keeping a running check on the rapidly fluctuating light), a crowd of Indians are ready for the shot. Laszlo speaks briefly to his assistant, and signals to Hopper from behind the camera. "Camera!" yells Hopper, and Laszlo begins shooting. A moment later, Hopper yells, "Action!" The crowd begins to move. But a strange clacking sound is coming from the camera, and after a second or two Laszlo yells, "Hold it! The take-up reel is running backwards!" The crowd mills to a stop. Laszlo pokes around at the camera, bends down and examines the battery pack, straightens up. "It's connected wrong. Wait a second." He fiddles with the connection, runs the camera for a bit, and shouts, "OK, let's go." The entire delay has taken less than a minute.

The shot begins again. The crowd moves to the right, and after a few seconds Laszlo pans the camera to follow them. Innumerable options have been considered, evaluated, accepted or rejected during this simple shot--many of them unconsciously. Laszlo knows, for instance, that there is enough film left in the magazine to complete the shot. He knows that the crowd nearly fills the frame. He knows that he has to use an ultra violet filter at 14,000 feet. He knows that the intense light will cause his light meter to read incorrectly, and the exposure must be delicately adjusted. He knows that the pan must start precisely *now*. and move just *so* fast. He knows that this particular lens will render the depth of the shot just the way Hopper wants it. He knows that the far mountains will be slightly out of focus, which will contrast nicely with the next shot in the film. He knows that the pan will end on a darker part of the village square than it starts on, and that therefore the lens aperture must be opened just slightly while the camera is panning.

Yet, all these factors are technical concerns, and even a merely competent cameraman will deal with them. What, then, makes Laszlo so special? A very simple, and exceedingly rare thing: he is aware of the emotional and ideological implications of his technical operations. Putting it another way, his shots mean something. The shot discussed above will be beautiful to look at, and it will be well exposed and framed--in short, it will be "professional". But far more important, it will work to carry Hopper's emotional message to the viewer--through Laszlo's artful technology.

CAMERA: LASZLO KOVACS

by Michael Goodwin

archive 2021

Light and shadow, color intensity, focus, depth of field, composition: these are the variables. Frequently the director will have a clear idea of how he wants these things to function, but it is the cameraman alone who achieves them. Looking at **Targets,** or **Five Easy Pieces,** one can see that the visual atmosphere, the *ambience*, is determined largely by Laszlo's cinematography. How much of the sense of freedom that infused **Easy Rider** would be retained if the shots were not as clean and open as Laszlo made them? How much of the dark mood of **Hells Angels On Wheels** would have come across without Laszlo's powerful, low-angle shots?

This is where Laszlo's art may be seen, and where we get to the heart of his greatness: Laszlo's cinematography communicates ideas and emotions. His art has meaning. It is this fact, coupled with his utter lack of temperament and his willingness to work cheerfully under arduous, uncomfortable conditions, that has made him, in the space of only a few years, not only the most sought-after cameraman in Hollywood, but the only American cinematographer who can be mentioned in the same breath with Raoul Coutard.

Laszlo was not born in America, but in Hungary--in 1933. His love for the movies started only shortly thereafter. "Instead of going to school," he recalls, "I went to the movies. My last year of high school was a disaster--I had 270 hours that I couldn't account for. I saw every film that played in Budapest."

Somehow he graduated, and a year later he was accepted as a student in cinematography at the prestigious Academy of Theater and Motion Picture Arts. The four-year course literally opened his eyes. Classes in lighting and camera operation were alternated with liberal arts courses, drawing classes and surveys of classic painting. Laszlo drank all of it in: this was exactly what he had been waiting so long for.

"They taught you how to see, and how to express what you see," he says. "The scope of the school was incredible. Like the art history courses--you can learn a lot from classic paintings: composition in freeze-frame. And the technical classes were great too: cameras, lenses, lighting, lab work. Like a painter, you were taught to be a total master of your tools."

He graduated in June, 1956. In October, the Hungarian Revolution broke out. Laszlo was a film maker, and with a close friend, Bill Zsigmond, he set out to film it. They had an Arriflex camera which they kept hidden in a shopping bag. "It was very dangerous. The Russians were so touchy about photographers that they were shooting people on the spot if they had a camera. But we had a good system. We'd open the bag, pull out the camera, shoot for thirty or forty seconds while the other one was on guard and watching, put the camera back in the bag and walk to another spot. We shot like this for three weeks."

When the commissars began visiting various film studios, looking for footage and names, Laszlo realized that he had to get out of the country. There were 30,000 feet of film by this time, and a third friend was enlisted to help them get it across the border to Austria. Their escape run would make a good Hitchcock movie: three young men lugging big potato sacks full of contraband film, encounters with submachinegun-carrying Russian officers, capture, panic, escape, a midnight rendezvous in the corn fields, a last-minute traffic jam at the border, and finally sanctuary in Austria. The footage was sold to a producer for $10,000, but he didn't have enough money to pay them the whole amount; to make up the difference, he threw in an old Arriflex. The footage ended up on CBS-TV, and Laszlo ended up in America. It was March, 1957.

He couldn't speak much English, and after a short stint in the woods he got a job in the film lab of a Seattle TV station. Within a year he had moved to Hollywood, where the action was; he wanted to shoot film. With Zsigmond, who was also in the States, he made a short subject called **Blue of the Sky,** but there was no money to finish it and he had to get a temporary job in the microfilm lab of an insurance company. The temporary job lasted four years.

But Laszlo still had the Arriflex, and in 1963 he happened on a small film crew shooting a nudie down the block from where he worked. The producer was yelling and screaming: the dailies had just come back and there was no image on the film. "I'm a cameraman, and I've got a camera, too," said Laszlo; suddenly he had a job as well. It only paid $35, but he was shooting again. A few more nudies followed, a sky-diving short which was never released, some educational films and documentaries, and a super-low-budget western ("They couldn't even afford horses.") called **Mark of the Gun,** which was never released.

Then he got a telephone call. A young, talented cameraman was needed for a low-budget feature. "They told me to come down and meet Dick Rush. We got together a few times, discussed the script, he looked at my film, and finally he hired me to shoot **A Man Called Dagger.**"

Dagger was a start, but not much more. "We had a ridiculous schedule--three weeks--and a tiny budget. But it was my first real feature, and my first association with Dick. We didn't have time to look for any visual interests--we just had to make the film for what it was: a low-budget James Bond imitation. Somehow, in the early films I made with Richard, we never had time to plan a production. We always had to make it up as we went along.

"The photography was very crude. I didn't have that much experience, and I was tremendously aware of the three-week schedule and how much we had to shoot. But still, I think it's tremendous that we were able to finish the film at all." **Dagger** was finished in 1964, and Laszlo didn't get another shot at a feature for nearly two years. He filled in with TV commercials, experimenting with the long lens and rack focus styles that were to become basic elements of his visual repertoire.

Kovacs and friend, then (left to right) Savage Seven and Hells Angels on Wheels

Long lens and rack focus styles are closely related, as both are made possible by one of the characteristic properties of a long focal-length lens: its shallow depth of field. Essentially, this means that there's a shallow plane that will be in focus, and all objects in front or in back of that plane will be out of focus.

For instance, consider Dennis Hopper standing a few feet in front of his motorcycle. Using a "normal" lens, both Hopper and his bike will be in focus. But with a long lens, a choice must be made: either Hopper *or* his bike will be in focus (depending on the setting of the lens), but not both. Using this characteristic of the lens to purposefully select the plane of focus is the long lens style. Antonioni's **Red Desert** was shot almost entirely with long lens.

Similarly, changing (or "racking") focus rapidly from Hopper to his bike, or vice versa, is called "rack focus" (or sometimes "critical focus") style. In a rack focus change, we begin with Hopper in focus and his bike a blur behind him. Then, as the focus is changed, Hopper will suddenly become a blur and the bike will come into sharp focus.

Rack focus, as a technique, has just begun to be explored, but its potential for blocking a scene without cuts or "covering" shots is tremendous. Usually, a scene is covered by having the actors repeat it several times while it is shot from different angles. This way, in a scene with two actors, the first actor can deliver his line in a close-up, and the next line, by the second actor, will be shown in a separate shot. Covering a scene is perfectly acceptable in most situations, but it can lead to problems when the actors are improvising dialogue or action; in such cases it's difficult for the actors to repeat the scene exactly. Rack focus offers a method for

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shooting such an improvised scene, and markedly reduces the need for sticking to a script. For the Hollywood New Wave, it was a natural technique--in fact, it was practically an ideological necessity.

Using rack focus, both actors are in the shot from beginning to end, but the shot starts with the second actor held out of focus while the first actor delivers his line. Then, as the second actor begins to speak, focus is racked rapidly to bring him into focus as the first actor becomes a blur. The see-saw focus change can be repeated as many times as necessary to complete the scene.

Richard Rush, who was one of the first directors to really *use* rack focus, said recently, "If you want to improvise, you have to be able to stage your scenes in terms of long, continuous passages that you don't have to cover. Laszlo and I worked with telephoto lenses, and ended up in the critical focus style where we start in a close-up, go into a two-shot, glimpse the room for a second, and go back into a close-up--all without editing. And because it's happening without a cut, you have to believe it's really happening. It's like playing three-dimensional chess."

In any case, it was during his "commercial" stage that Laszlo became a master of these techniques. 1965 was a good year for commercials; **A Hard Day's Night** had opened the eyes of the commercial houses, and the opportunities for a creative cameraman to experiment with his tools were boundless. However, even with the atmosphere of creative freedom, "commercials really get to your head," and when Rush asked him to shoot another feature, in 1967, Laszlo was more than ready. The film was **Hells Angels On Wheels,** and it was the start of everything.

Hells Angels wasn't exactly a choice property, Rush explains: "I was handed the following situation. 'You won't have to lose your house if you do this picture. It's got real Hells Angels in it.' " Rush didn't want to lose his house. Laszlo wasn't very enthusiastic about the project either, but it was better than commercials.

"I wasn't very excited when I read the script," he says, "but from the first day of shooting Richard really involved our imaginations. He's an ideal director. My approach to shooting a film is one of intense involvement. I feel if you don't get into the characters' heads, you can't make the story interesting. The intensity of your approach definitely shows up on the screen, and I was tremendously involved with **Hells Angels.** Photographically, there are a lot of terrible mistakes in the film, but the over-all movement of it is so strong that you don't notice. Something gets you very deeply involved.

"Richard makes you improvise a lot, and many of the images in **Hells Angels** were made on the spur of the moment. We were having lunch one day, and we saw this beautiful row of trees. I said, 'Get the camera and a few of the bikers.' Richard said, 'What about your lunch?' I said, 'Never mind lunch, just get me the Arri and a magazine of film.' We sent the bikers way back, and told them to just kind of float through the trees, to ride around and have fun in the riding. I started to shoot as the bikes came toward me. They swung around me and did all these stunts, like a fake bullfight and so on, and we covered it like a documentary. It was one of the most beautiful scenes in the film."

Hells Angels On Wheels was a remarkable picture, but American International Pictures (AIP) considered it just another exploitation film and booked it mostly into drive-in theaters. Hardly anyone noticed the Faustian overlay that Rush had worked into the film--the Devil in the form of Adam Roarke, Faust in the form of Jack Nicholson, the Devil's lure in the form of Sabrina Sharf. Neither did many people notice that Laszlo's cinematography gave the film a curious black-light luminescence that rendered it utterly terrifying. **Hells Angels** is a black, hopeless film, full of a beautifully orchestrated despair.

It's easy to under-estimate the importance of **Hells Angels. Easy Rider** (which made a lot of money) is generally considered to be the film that started the Hollywood revolution, but it drew much of its strength (and many of its production techniques) from Rush's film. **Hells Angels On Wheels** is a benchmark film; it set the style for the Hollywood New Wave, and it did so two years before Hopper hit the road. It's probably *the* sleeper of the 60's.

Laszlo finished **Hells Angels** on a Friday, and on the following Monday he began shooting **Targets** for Peter Bogdanovich, a brilliant young film critic who was making his first film. It was another low-budget project, but with a difference: The film included a character based very closely on Boris Karloff, and somehow Peter had gotten Karloff to play it. There was one problem--Karloff could only work for a week.

"It was one of the most exciting weeks of my life," says Laszlo. "Karloff had always been a myth to me, but working with him he became a real person, a beautiful old man. At the beginning he was a little nervous. He said. 'But Peter, this is *me*. I can't say these things about myself.' Finally Peter won him over, and from that moment Karloff was absolutely wonderful.

"Peter is extremely different from Dick Rush--he designs his sequences so carefully that there's no room for improvisation. It's the same way Hitchcock works: he just demands what he sees in his mind. At first I was very annoyed with Peter--it's frustrating when a director tells you to put the camera here, and put a 75 lens on it. I felt that I couldn't really contribute. But in half a day working with him, he made you realize what's important in making a film. As a cameraman, you still control the lighting, the movement of the camera, the feeling--all those things are out of the control of the director.

Easy Rider

"There are people who insist they're right, and they're always wrong. Peter is always right. When you're dealing with a director of his calibre, you can totally accept direction. He really helped me to learn, because he was so specific about what he wanted. It's a shame that **Targets** didn't get the kind of public exposure it deserved."

Targets was the second benchmark film in the history of the Hollywood New Wave, and of course it went almost totally unnoticed. A few critics mentioned it, but it closed quickly and has never been re-released. The sureness of directorial touch that Bogdanovich brought to it was matched by Laszlo's brilliant expressionistic photography (a look he was not to achieve again until **Five Easy Pieces**), but as far as the major studios were concerned, **Targets** was merely a curiosity.

Laszlo's next project was another film for Rush, **Psych-Out.** It was about the "love generation," and it was butchered by AIP. "Everyone who's seen Dick's version has told me that it's my best work, even up to today," says Laszlo ruefully. "The whole thing unfolds in front of you like you're in it, a part of it; I think that's a beautiful thing to say about a film. AIP only cut twelve minutes, but it totally destroyed the concept. It made everything completely impossible. You don't believe a thing in the film."

Rush and Kovacs were in the groove, though, and their next film was a masterpiece. **The Savage Seven** was yet another motorcycle epic, but it was based on Kurosawa's **Seven Samurai.** It was also Laszlo's first real opportunity to use some of the camera techniques he had been working on. "We were looking for a specific visual style," he says, "so we worked with long lens and rack focus. It lent itself to the film beautifully, and Dick staged a lot of the action specifically for it."

Savage Seven was the third benchmark film, and a totally successful picture. The images had a clarity and beauty that were

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unheard of in a low-budget exploitation film, and the dramatic flow of the story was just as unusual. Rush played his film barely this side of self-satire, and the comedy was intelligent and pointed. Yet just beneath the surface ran a current of tragedy that was nearly Shakespearian in its terrible inevitability. It worked perfectly, on whatever level you cared to consider. It was released in 1968.

Then Dennis Hopper called. Actually, it was Paul Lewis calling for him. Lewis is another key figure in the history of the Hollywood New Wave, and his involvement goes back even further than **Hells Angels**--back to 1965, and the mysterious figure of Monte Hellman. The reason Hellman is mysterious is that his two great westerns (**The Shooting** and **Ride In The Whirlwind**) have never been released in the United States, and consequently nobody has ever heard of him. If the westerns *had* been released, the Hollywood renaissance might have flowered a few years earlier, and Hellman would be a famous director. In any case, Paul Lewis produced Hellman's films, and went on to work in the same capacity on **Hells Angels On Wheels** and **The Savage Seven.**

"All I can say about Laszlo Kovacs is that he's the best cameraman in town," says Lewis. "I'll tell you where he is for me, since I'm involved with production. He's totally aware of production, he knows costs, and he knows what it's going to take to do a shot. Where he really excels is when you tell him, 'We've got a terrible problem, we're running out of light, we've got to finish this location today,' and he'll say, 'OK, don't worry about it.' And without changing any of the concepts of the sequence, he gets it done. Beautifully. He has a remarkable sense of totality, the relationship of film to reality. He is an artist."

Lewis was producing **Easy Rider,** and wanted Laszlo to shoot it. Laszlo wasn't so sure: "When Paul told me that he had another motorcycle picture coming up, I told him I'd rather go back to the insurance company, or do commercials. I felt that I had done all I could with motorcycle films. But Paul said, 'Don't be so prejudiced, this film is different.' He told me that Dennis would be back from New York with the script within a week, and could tell me more about it.

"A week later, Dennis came into the production office with a bunch of typewritten pages under his arm. His hair was flowing, he was wearing a beautiful patterned shirt, and he said, 'Oh my God, I just came from the plane, here it is.' And he threw it down on the table. He unfolded the whole film for us, talking for three hours--and it sounded absolutely beautiful. It was obvious, immediately, that we had to do the film. And Paul just sat there, not saying anything, with a big smirk on his face. We never suspected how revolutionary the film was going to be, or how successful--all we felt was that it was going to be a very exciting project.

"We started shooting in Los Angeles, on the whore house interiors. It was the beginning of a very great relationship between Dennis and myself. Because he'd been hurt so many times, Dennis was very suspicious at the beginning. He kept double checking me. I thought if it was going to be like that for the whole picture, I wouldn't be able to take it. But from the time we saw the first dailies, Dennis was beautiful--from that moment on there was no mistrust, no bad feeling.

"We shot some sequences in Los Angeles that were never used. The film was supposed to start with these two guys working in big county fairs, going from town to town and doing motorcycle riding demonstrations. They decide to quit the gypsy life, make some big money and retire in Florida. So we shot some of the stunt riding sequences, and they quit, they go out to score, they wait for the connection, they get into trouble in a drive-in cafe, and they have a fight with a motorcycle gang. Then they go to the airport, which is actually in the film.

"After that, we went on the road for six or seven weeks. The key to everything was that we had a very small crew--basically twelve guys. More films could be made that way, but . . . a lot of film makers went in the wrong direction. They tried to duplicate the plot of **Easy Rider** instead of the production style."

The rest is instant history. **Easy Rider** was the fourth New Wave benchmark film (the sixth, if we count Hellman's westerns), but it was the first one to make money--the language studio heads understand. "It's strange," says Laszlo, "because there was nothing unusual about the way we made it. We had done the other films the same way--**Hells Angels, Savage Seven, Targets.** But all the Hollywood businessmen understood was that the film was cheaply made and brought in so many millions. Which to me was totally immaterial."

Why was **Easy Rider** so successful? Timing had something to do with it--there was a "youth market" by this time--but Dennis' visionary zeal and Laszlo's stunning camerawork seemed to illuminate each other. The potent combination amounted to a style --one that fit the time, place and subject better than anyone could have suspected. Suddenly, pairs of kids on choppers were everywhere--a sure sign that a nerve had been touched. And a certain paranoia spread through the land.

Just as suddenly, Laszlo was a star in his own right. It didn't change him much; he remained gentle, soft-spoken, modest. Laszlo had always felt that the role of the cameraman was to support the director's vision, and being famous didn't change his mind: "When you're making a film, you have to respect one thing--film is the director's medium. Your loyalty should always go to the director. When you work with different directors, you work with different abilities, talents. You have to support the director, even if you think he's wrong. You should *tell* him if you think he's wrong, but it's his responsibility to accept the suggestion or reject it."

Style in Hollywood is set quickly, and Laszlo found himself in terrific demand. His next film was **A Cold Day in the Park,** for Robert Altman. It wasn't very successful--there were problems with the script that never got ironed out--but Laszlo was very proud of the visuals. "It was my great exercise in lighting," he says. It was also the film that got him into the union (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees), thus creating a whole new set of problems--problems that are still largely unsolved.

The union differentiates between the camera operator and the Director of Photography. Once you're in the union as a Director of Photography, you are forbidden to operate a camera in Hollywood. If you work outside of Hollywood, or outside the country, you can run the camera. Otherwise you set up the shot, arrange the lights, take light meter readings, select the lens, and stand back while the operator makes your shot for you. For a creative cinematographer, it's a nightmare--something like a pianist telling someone else how to play his piano.

Laszlo's next film was **Getting Straight,** directed by Richard Rush. It should have been a triumph--a reunion of two of the seminal forces in the Hollywood New Wave--but instead it was one frustration after another. Laszlo ran full-tilt into the stone wall of union regulations.

"I couldn't operate my own camera. This is a problem that really bothers me, because if you consider yourself any kind of an artist, you have to be able to deal with your own instrument. It's a very unjust situation. If you're not looking through the camera, operating it, you let certain brushstrokes go wild.

"We selected the rack focus style for **Getting Straight** because we knew from **Savage Seven** that it would work. But every time we would try a rack focus change in rehearsal, the operator would say, 'It doesn't work, it doesn't work.' I would have done it

myself, but I was told by the union that if I ever touched the camera I would be brought up on charges.

"The whole system is set up to protect the category of working operators. I was told that I had to realize there were a lot of people in that category, and they can't suddenly be on the street without a job. But I'm not trying to get a job away from somebody; it's totally for artistic reasons. Anyway, I had big arguments with the operator, and he would never even come to see the dailies. I said, 'Man, you've got to come, you've got to see what you're doing,' and all he would say was, 'I'm not getting paid for it.' Awful! The only solution is to do it yourself. And you can't."

But you can if you work out of the country, and **Five Easy Pieces,** directed by Bob Rafelson, was shot mostly in Canada. Laszlo ran his own camera, and **Five Easy Pieces** is a stunning example of creative cinematography. "I tried to keep the photography simple," he says. "Bob Rafelson and I saw the film as a kind of Chekhovian play. So we decided that we would never move the camera when we were in exteriors, just work with cuts and composition. It's all set shots. One time I panned the camera just a little, and he bawled me out for it.

"Inside, we only moved a little, except for the first time Jack arrives, when he comes through the door and goes into the living room. And of course there's that beautiful move when Jack is playing the piano for Catherine, and the camera goes down to her hand on the music sheet, to the violin, up to her face, to the pictures on the wall, and finally back to her. It's really fun when you design and create a shot. That shot is a perfect example, because it's a very mechanical shot per se--there are a lot of technical things involved in it. But basically, one thing ties it together: what he does to her through his music. The camera movement conveys everything. It's pure cinema, and it's worth more than a hundred pages of dialogue."

Five Easy Pieces

When **Five Easy Pieces** was finished, Laszlo and his wife Bea moved into a beautiful house high in the Beverly hills, just down the street from Fritz Lang. Then, with boxes and cartons strewn everywhere, they got on an airplane with Dennis Hopper, bound for Peru to shoot **The Last Movie.** Laszlo ran his own camera and from all indications another benchmark film is on the way.

Laszlo is very excited about **Last Movie.** "Dennis leaves room for everybody--he lets things happen. He just winks at you, and that might be his total communication. I enjoy that kind of creative freedom tremendously, and I think **Last Movie** is going to be a much better film than **Easy Rider.** If you look at **Easy Rider** in terms of filmic structure, it doesn't have nearly the drama that **Last Movie** has. I know the images are better in **Last Movie,** just from seeing the dailies. And its comment is so powerful, it has such a strong symbolic story. It's going to be incredible."

Laszlo wound up 1970 with two Hollywood films--**Alex In Wonderland,** directed by Paul Mazursky, and **Marriage of a Young Stockbroker,** a first-film by Larry Turman. On **Alex,** he was able to shoot some of the film himself, and the rest of it was shot by an operator who Laszlo approves of: "He's a very talented guy," says Laszlo. "It's only a matter of time before he becomes a Director of Photography himself. And can't run his own camera." **Stockbroker** is another story--an unwieldy, large-scale production that Laszlo is very uneasy about. "At the time the job was offered to me, I didn't have anything else coming. I like to keep working, so I agreed to do it. It's a mistake I made, and I'm paying for it very dearly."

It's ironic that Laszlo Kovacs, who had so much to do with the emergence of the low-budget independent production, finds himself, at the peak of his career, working on big-time studio films. Laszlo himself is a bit disturbed by it. "The biggest thing to me is that I was a part of such an exciting era. I feel a little like a has-been, because somehow that era is already gone. The films we worked on were always so rushed that we'd say, 'If we only had two more weeks, we could make a really great film.' And now I'm working on films with ten, twelve-week shooting schedules, but I miss the tremendous excitement that surrounded the project.

"But it's not over, not really. That's the way we did **Five Easy Pieces,** and of course **The Last Movie** isn't even finished yet. There will be more films like that--and I'm going to be involved. I'm going to go back to it. I think it's up to us where the whole film making trip goes. I'm not striving to do many million-dollar pictures, because I don't think they're necessary. The independent film is the answer. Just give us the financing and let us do the film.

"We laid down the groundwork for independent production, and I'm really anxious to develop it. The major studios are just about done for, and they're going to have to resort strictly to financing and distribution. They're going to have to let the film makers make their own films, and give them more creative freedom. We always had that freedom on **Hells Angels, Targets, Savage Seven, Psych-Out, Easy Rider.** I still believe that films can be made that way, just as well, just as easily, just as cheaply. It's not a question of how much money you spend on a picture, it's a question of who's making the film. That's what makes it good or bad."

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In July, 1971, Laszlo turned up in Berkeley shooting a film with Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland called **Steelyard Blues**, and we got the following on tape:

"After **Stockbroker** we did Bill Fraker's film, called . . . there's still no title, but the working title was **The Daughter**. It was a Gothic mystery suspense story. Fraker himself is a cameraman—he shot **Rosemary's Baby**, and he's very good—and I was a little nervous. Visually it's a very different kind of film from anything I did before. The lighting and visuals were extremely important, and I wanted them to be very good because Fraker really knows photography.

"Then I did a film with Stuart Rosenberg, called **Pocket Money**. It stars Lee Marvin and Paul Newman, and it was really a gas. I shot for the country, featuring it in its true guise. It was very simple, almost like a classic John Ford color movie. We hardly moved the camera—maybe we had three little dolly shots. It was just good old desert and burned up country, and these two guys playing against this background.

"We used a lot of wide-angle stuff—the long lens would have been totally wrong, 'cause we wanted to go for the big expanse of country. The long lens condenses, compresses, makes it two-dimensional. We used the 20mm, and it worked very well. To achieve the feeling of heat I over-exposed the stock, almost a full stop, and on top of that I used a heavy fog filter. The over-exposure gives you an almost washed out hotness, plus the fog filter really blasts it—you really feel the heat.

Two days after I got home from **Pocket Money** I got a call from Harold that the cameraman who had started **Steelyard Blues** got injured, and could I take over. I said OK, but I don't know . . . I still haven't been able to see anything the other cameraman shot. They were shooting for three or four weeks. But I don't think there'll be much of a difference between the stuff he shot and the stuff I'm shooting.

"After this I'm going to do Peter's [Bogdanovich] film, **What's Up Doc?**, with Barbra Streisand, which is going to be a real challenge. Peter wants to make a good old traditional comedy, like a Marx Brothers comedy. He told me, 'I'd love you to shoot it, but don't expect any sensational visuals because there won't be any.' I told him, 'Don't worry about it.' "

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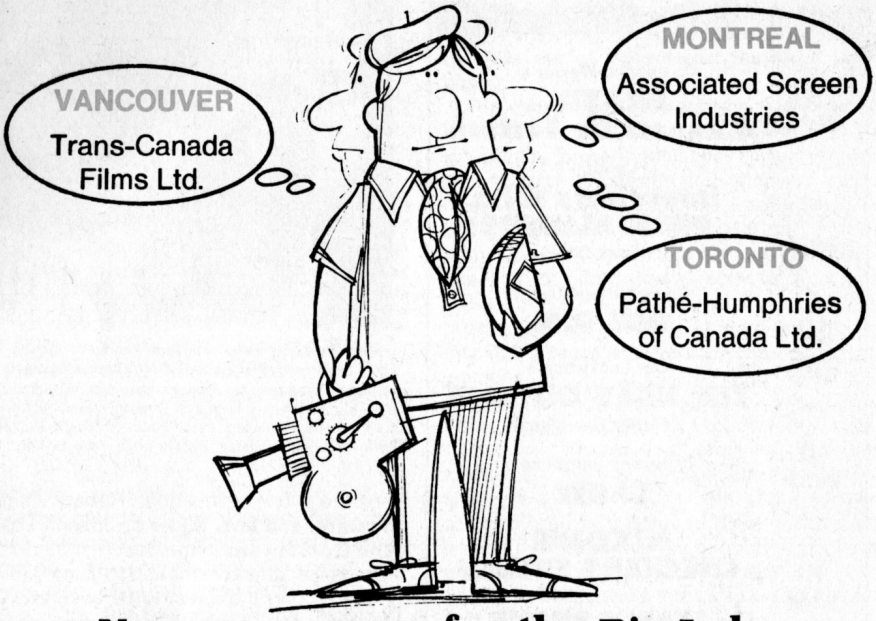

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SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY

United Artists Release. A Joseph Janni Production, 1971. Color. Written by Penelope Gilliatt. Cinematography: Billy Williams. Produced by Joseph Janni. Editor: Richard Marden. Music: Michel Legrand. Director: John Schlesinger. Cast: Glenda Jackson, Peter Finch, Murray Head, Peggy Ashcroft, Vivian Pickles, Bessie Love, Tony Britton.

Anyone who claims that Robert Altman's **McCabe and Mrs. Miller** or Joseph Losey's **The Go-Between** is the best film of 1971 deserves an attentive hearing. They are certainly among the finest to be seen this year, and they stick to the memory long after the first viewing. Altman's bawdy ballad about frontier life is probably the finest American film since **Bonnie and Clyde**. Losey's gently ironic story of a doomed love affair in Edwardian England is an astonishing accomplishment—the more so considering that it was filmed quickly over eight weeks on a budget of one million by the 62-year-old director.

Yet there is one film that is more important. In a year that began with the box office being dominated by **Love Story**, and which is ending being dominated by **Carnal Knowledge**, the new film by John Schlesinger **Sunday Bloody Sunday** is a major event. At last there is a film about love and sex that is intelligent, perceptive, honest and compassionate. **Carnal Knowledge** is smug, treats its characters like cretins and invites the audience to get drunk with self-satisfaction—though the film itself is in no way superior to the characters it portrays and is as vacuous in its core as they are in their souls; **Sunday Bloody Sunday** knows all that **Carnal Knowledge** knows about people, and much more.

Sunday Bloody Sunday isn't a film of flashy brilliance. The camera work by Billy Williams (**Women in Love**), costume designs by Jocelyn Rickards (**Blow Up, Ryan's Daughter**) and editing by Richard Marden show an unobtrusive craftmanship, faultless but not clamouring for attention. Penelope Gilliatt's screenplay seems to have given the film not only its plot and dialogue, but imbued the film with a taste for understatement that no other Schlesinger film has had in the past. The film is segmented like a diary and depicts events over a ten day period in contemporary London. Bob Elkin is a 24-year-old pop artist who divides his time between Alex Greville, a 34-year-old divorced woman, and Dr. Daniel Hirsh, a Jewish doctor in his early forties. Surrounding them are other relationships—Alex's parents, Daniel's parents, Alva and Bill Hodson (a pair of "permissive" parents whose pre-teen children smoke pot and have a precocious "knowledge" about sex), Daniel's patients who like to visit him and have a good cry—people of all ages and stages of life. The film has such an encompassing view of human life that almost anyone who sees it will find a reflection and comment upon themselves. To do this without being superficial or melodramatic, without seeking any easy out for the difficult questions which the film dares to ask, ("Is a relationship of life-long duration possible in the 20th century? Is it desirable? At what expense?) **Sunday Bloody Sunday** becomes an important film, in addition to merely being a well-made one.

Here is an excerpt from Penelope Gilliatt's original screenplay: Alex is played by Glenda Jackson, Bob by newcomer Murray Head.

ALEX: When are you going?

BOB: In a day or two.

ALEX: Why did I have to ask you?

BOB: I'll be back. You'll be here. We can ring each other up.

ALEX: I'm *bound* to be here.

BOB: You shouldn't have decided to quit that job. You need something to occupy that piercing educated mind. You're at a loose end, that's all.

ALEX: No. That's absolutely not it.

BOB: Nothing's changed.

ALEX: That's bang on right. That's the trouble. *Nothing's* changed. All this fitting in and shutting up and making do. Me being careful not to ask about Daniel, Daniel not getting any answers from you because you're here, my old mum not making demands for umpteen years, and my *fucking* office. I don't want to live like this any more. *Don't* ring. I won't be here when you get back. We've got to pack this in and I don't know what else to say.

BOB: Look. Would it make any difference if we tried to live together? I don't want to lose you.

ALEX: Hey. Darling. You couldn't do it. Don't even say it. (tries to light cigarette) Blast! I've got the shakes. I bought your terms, and they were rotten terms, and I shouldn't have done it. My fault.

BOB: You keep asking too much.

ALEX: For God's sake. Caring about someone a lot? Is that too much? People with some time for each other. Is that too much? I've had this business that anything is better than nothing. There are times when nothing *has* to be better than anything. If you look back on this—which you won't, my darling—you'll say it's got something to do with Daniel. It hasn't . . . (The phone goes. Bob doesn't dare move to answer it. He watches Alex. Alex answers.)

ALEX: It's New York for you. Wouldn't you know. (Bob goes to the phone beside the bed and lies down. Alex begins to laugh.)

BOB: Put him on. (to Alex) What's the joke?

ALEX: I was thinking of someone else.

BOB: Hi. Shout a bit, we've got a lousy connection.

ALEX: (knowing she can't be heard) . . . of my old mum actually. You can't hear, and I love you a lot, and I don't want you to go.

The majority of films made are not really worth seeing. Even as entertainment they are witless and sleazy. **Sunday Bloody Sunday** is a very rare type of film—it not only possesses great artistry, but it is art with an intelligent, deeply moving purpose that enhances; rather than demeans, human life. The only films that should be made are those that *must* be made—those that issue from some compelling need in the artist to express something important, and communicate it clearly to those who have some immediate or eventual need of it. **Sunday Bloody Sunday**, almost singlehandedly, raises the tone of movies this year and restores one's faith in the medium. After all the little panics in needle park, the sweet sweetbacks and Dusty McGee's, the love machines and other tripe, it's an immense pleasure to see a film that makes a vaulting leap into greatness.

John Hofsess

McCABE AND MRS. MILLER

Produced by David Foster and Mitchell Brower. 1971. Directed by Robert Altman. Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond. Screenplay: Robert Altman and Brian McKay. Production Design: Leon Ericksen. Editor and 2nd unit: Louis Lombardo. Music: Leonard Cohen. Cast: Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, Rene Auberjonois, Hugh Millais, Shelley Duvall, Michael Murphy, John Schuck, Corey Fischer, William Devane.

I hated **Brewster McCloud,** and never got around to seeing **M»A»S»H,** so I figured that **McCabe** was probably going to be lousy. It isn't. In fact, it's almost shockingly impressive.

McCabe may not be the best film of the decade (as some critics have suggested), but it *is* consistently interesting from beginning to end, and deeply moving as well. It suggests that Robert Altman is one of the few young directors who understand what *mise en scène* is all about. It also suggests that Altman's misdirection technique ("misdirection" in the sense of now-you-see-it-now-you-don't) can succeed brilliantly given a plot structure strong enough to support its weight. Maybe I should have seen **M»A»S»H** after all.

The plot: McCabe (Warren Beatty) is a gambler/entrepreneur, and Mrs. Miller (Julie Christie) is a whore who runs his whorehouse. They set up shop in a small frontier town around the turn of the century, do business, and (perhaps) fall in love. A large mining company offers to buy out McCabe's holdings (including a gambling hall and a bathhouse, as well as the whorehouse), and when he refuses they send a couple of hired guns to (perhaps) kill him. There's a gunfight in the middle of the damnedest snowstorm you've ever seen, and various people die. Oh yeah, and the church burns down.

The town itself is one of the main characters of the film, and we watch it grow from a saloon and a couple of houses at the beginning of the film to a small but prospering community at the end. John Ford would have used the growing town as a symbol, but Altman plays his cards closer to the chest than that—he just sticks in the town, and we can watch it if we want to. Perhaps there *is* a suggestion that the town, like Brecht's Mahagonny, is really an ethical construct, a city of nets, but the film never cops to it.

In fact, the film hardly cops to anything. Instead, details accrete, and after a while there's a movie. Altman draws back from making any overt statement except once, near the end, when he shows us a sign on McCabe's gambling hall. It reads FAIR GAMES OF CHANCE. Considering that the shot occurs in the middle of the gunfight, we get the strong impression that Altman wants us to *read* the sign—i.e., that he's showing it to us for a reason. And this is unusual, because mostly Altman shows us everything but refuses to tell us what's important and what isn't. The film is densely packed with finely-observed images, clever dialogue and interesting people. Some of the images/dialogue/people pertain to the plot, while others do not. The puzzle of the film is to figure out which are which—a very interesting way to make a movie.

Vil Szigmond's cinematography is superb. It contributes so strongly to the impact and beauty of the film that one is tempted to give Szigmond co-direction credit. He has done much more than merely create strong compositions—he has manipulated the color and tone of the film, the intensity of the light itself, to underscore the emotional currents of the drama. The opening sequence, shot in a heavy rain, is washed and thin, yet the light is intense and dazzling. We *feel* the rain; we *feel* the cold. The following sequence is an interior, a crowded saloon lit by lantern light, and again the color of the light (hot orange) supports and intensifies the emotional power, the physical crowdedness of the scene. Also, the final snowstorm shoot-out, as you've probably heard, is simply a tour de force. (The film was shot in British Columbia.)

The performances, too, are perfectly marvelous. We really *care* about McCabe and Mrs. Miller, not to mention any number of minor characters who seem just as fully realized. Credit must go to the actors, of course, but it should go to Altman as well. He has drawn fully rounded characterizations from nearly every player in the film. Beatty seems so relaxed as McCabe that he hardly appears to be acting at all. Christie, on the other hand, has to work at Mrs. Miller, but she pulls it off brilliantly. Together, they establish a rapport that reminds me of Bogart and Bacall at their best.

The differences between the two characters may lie somewhere near the center of the film's power. McCabe is a tinhorn, whose strength lies in his ability to bluff. Mrs. Miller is a professional, whose strength lies in her ability to deliver. McCabe spouts empty profundities while Mrs. Miller, when she has to, penetrates directly to the heart of the matter. Her explanation to a beginning prostitute that whoring is just like being married, except with more freedom for the woman, is so right on that it clearly establishes Mrs. Miller as one of the film's prime spokeswomen; she knows the truth.

Perhaps, in the final analysis, McCabe loses his life because he doesn't know the truth. He accepts the bullshit that he spouts as truth, and is outbluffed, finally, because he has overestimated his hand. He may be a good card player, but he's a lousy existential hero; he expects things to make sense, and they never do.

Maybe, to get right down to it, the sign

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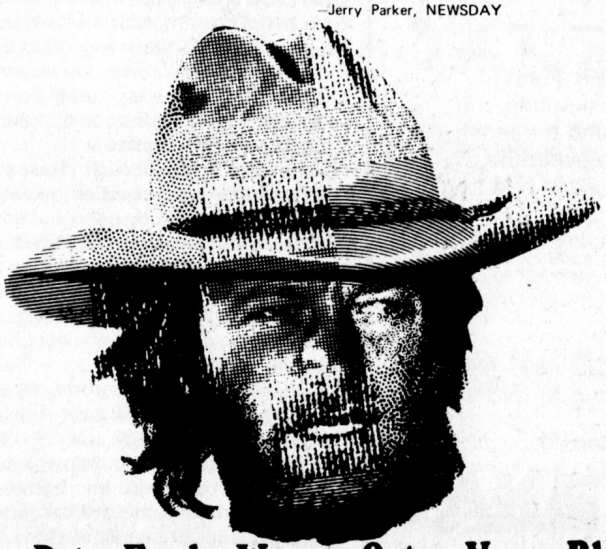

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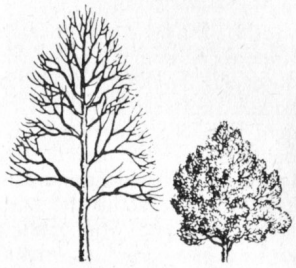
that says FAIR GAMES OF CHANCE is as close as we're going to get to the theme of **McCabe and Mrs. Miller.** "Fair," as it's used in the film, means "random," I think—which is as fair as anything is likely to get. True, McCabe shoots the killers in the back, but they are ready to do the same to him. Are the killers and the snowstorm any different? No, they are all relentlessly random, and McCabe just doesn't have what it takes. He loses because he plays badly. We all play badly sometimes.

My only complaint about the film is the Leonard Cohen soundtrack. I *hate* Leonard Cohen; he makes me sick. But soundtrack aside, let it stand this way: Robert Altman has made a fine, fine movie, and attention should be paid.

Michael Goodwin



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHESTER ANGUS RAMSGOOD

Directed, written, edited and photographed by David Curnick. Produced by Donald Wilson (West-Ridge Films Ltd.). Music by "Spring". Cast: Robert Matson, Mary Beth McGuffin, Judi Sommer and Ed Astley.

The Life and Times of Chester Angus Ramsgood is a hearty, unpretentious comedy which shows what imagination can do for young filmmakers (provided that imagination is stretched by the Canadian Film Development Corporation). The plot is simple and naturally funny: Chester Angus can't seem to get laid, and at nineteen that is a major matter. With a little help from his friends, all of it bumbling, loud and angry, he manages to approach an eager wench in all the wrong ways and upset everyone from her aunt, a judo green belt, to her father, a Vancouver Scot-lecher.

The pace is fast, the car chases brisk, and the vulgarity bright and enthusiastic. There is plenty of carefully-used speeded-up action and catchy stop-framing, but director David Curnick has been careful not to overuse either. The acting is consistently good, from the eight-year-olds to the old ladies who keep getting run over by Chester Angus' careworn Fiat.

What really surprises one about **Chester Angus Ramsgood** is how funny a good, square happy comedy can be after satires, black comedies and put-downs of complex modern problems. When it appeared on a double bill with Jutra's **Wow,** a technically superior work, it stole the show because it got there, fast and funny, while **Wow** laboured under doses of 'reality', 'truth' and badly digested technique left over from **La Chinoise.**

Chester Angus Ramsgood is a fine, funny Canadian film, about a topic which never wears thin.

P. Brigg

Peter Brigg is presently teaching modern drama at the University of Guelph and runs the Guelph Free Film Theatre.

THE ONLY THING YOU KNOW

Produced, written and directed by Clarke Mackey. Camera: Paul Lang. Leads: Ann Knox and Allan Royal. 85 minutes, colour. Distributor: Canadian Film Co-op, Suite 204, 341 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario.

There is emerging a distinctly Torontonian kind of film, and it reflects the ethos of Toronto in a peculiar way. Other cities possess an imaginative aura to which the private self-dramatizations of individuals can attach themselves. The ethos of Toronto is an unremitting ordinariness, with all the romantic mystique of a shopping plaza on a Sunday afternoon. It's not a place where you could believe that anything mysterious or piquant or grand or terrible might enter your life. Such an environment, like a landscape of apartment buildings, tends to assert the commonness of human experience rather than the singularity, the sameness of people rather than their uniqueness.

Toronto films lean characteristically towards the case-history, away from dramatic fiction. Where the films of Montreal-based Paul Almond, for example, pay tribute to romantic individualism, films like **Nobody Waved Goodbye** and **Goin' Down the Road** (both conceived originally as documentaries), not to mention **A Married Couple,** imply a view of man in the mass.

A new Toronto film is Clarke Mackey's first feature. **The Only Thing You Know.** It presents the passage of a few days or weeks in the life of an 18-year-old girl, in her last year of high school. Leaving the harrassments of the parental home, Ann (Ann Knox) moves in with a nice, rather ordinary young man, a teacher (Allan Royal). With the onset of bewilderment and disillusion, she returns home to assimilate this somewhat discouraging first encounter.

Other characters include: Paul (John Denos), a transient Californian, currently crashing at Allan's, with whom Ann spends one night during the decline in her relationship with Allan; Allan's friend Iain (filmmaker Iain Ewing, who steals an entire scene with his freaked-out Pan routine); Ann's friend Linda (Linda Huffman) who is earnest about Women's Lib; Ann's parents (Hugh and Eileen MacIntyre); and a post-Joe motorist (played by Mr. Mackey, Sr.) who gives Paul a ride and tells him how dirty young punks should be shipped back to the States.

The events are presented in a manner which appears to be inseparable from this sort of subject material. Essentially the film is a series of about fifteen 'episodes', linked by bridging passages in which the charac-

Bob Fothergill teaches English at York University and was recently the writer and producer of Countdown Canada, *a futuristic documentary on Canada's being taken over by the United States.*

ters do nothing in particular to the accompaniment of folkish music. Each episode adds a single main stroke to the quinze ou seize choses que nous savons d'elle. The structure of the film is a simple accumulation of scenes enacting the stages of Ann's brief emotional journey.

Equally characteristic of this class of film is the style of the individual scenes. The episodes are more or less improvised; the actors are playing projections of themselves, and are drawing on the resources of their own personalities rather than on techniques of acting applied to a script. The expression of emotion is generated by the actual involvement, for the time, of the participants with one another, so that, in a sense, 'real' emotional events do take place.

This then is the strength of the film—the authenticity of Ann, and the remarkably unegocentric attentiveness to her of Clarke Mackey's camera. Good things abound. A tavern scene in which Ann and Allan make shy contact behind Iain's exuberantly male-chauvinist play for Linda has the intricacy of a quartet. In a later scene, Ann attempts to communicate to Allan the desperation engendered by his impervious good nature; the noise of traffic and jet engines creates an almost palpable barrier between them.

The film's weaknesses are its inauthenticities, greater and less. A Women's Lib cell meeting, to which Linda takes Ann, is false and awkward; Ann's parents, father especially, tend to imitate stereotypes, and the satiric effect of this runs counter to the simpler truthfulness of the rest of the film. Intercut glimpses, early in the film, of Paul nearing Toronto, including a quick screw in the bushes with a girl who picks him up, are extraneous.

Mackey veers towards discomfort also whenever the film looks as if it's about to say something, either visually or through a character. Iain Ewing tells Allan to "be himself" in what appears to be a moment of truth. On another level, some footage of demonstrators clashing with police makes a gesture towards a socio-historic context for Ann's individual experience. Reminiscent of **Prologue,** but not integrated into the substance of the movie, the gesture is largely gratuitous.

The Only Thing You Know brings Mackey's earlier work together into an interesting symmetry. **On Nothing Days** (1966) rendered the scuffing about and romantic day-dreams of a gangly adolescent. In **Grass** (1968), more ambitious and less successful, boy met girl via a glutinous and patronising script. In this new film Mackey has observed truthfully and beautifully a person living her life, a life like millions of others, except to her. It's a fine and mature work, and deserves first rate distribution.

Robert Fothergill

DRIVE, HE SAID

A BBS Production, 1971. Color, 90 min. Producers: Steve Blauner and Jack Nicholson. Executive Producer: Bert Schneider. Director: Jack Nicholson. Screenplay: Jeremy Larner and Jack Nicholson, based on the novel by Jeremy Larner. Photography: Bill Butler. Music: David Shire. Cast: William Tepper, Karen Black, Michael Margotta, Bruce Dern, Robert Towne, Henry Jaglom. A Columbia Pictures release.

By the time **Drive, He Said** has run its course, the air is thick with the exhaust fumes of better movies that have gone down the road ahead of it. Here a whiff of **The Graduate**, there **This Sporting Life**; here **Joe,** there **The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner**; here **If . . .**, there **Five Easy Pieces.** For content it presents a catalogue of clichés, for creative energy it substitutes the thwacking force of a stapling gun.

Jack Nicholson created **Drive, He Said** on carte-blanche terms. He co-authored the script based on Jeremy Larner's novel (written in 1960, first published in 1965, and "stylistically updated" according to the author for its paperback edition in 1970) and produced and directed the film. He could have chosen any property, made any film, working on it as long and as diligently as he liked, casting carefully and re-shooting constantly, perfecting his conception—the terms that any film director dreams of having. **Drive, He Said** is, therefore, an example of how Nicholson—who has always derided the stupidities, insincerities and compromises of the Hollywood film industry—handled the total freedom he demanded, and which in and outside the realm of filmmaking many young people demand today.

Almost from the first frame there is something wrong with the film, elusively but persistently wrong. The haunting *Theme* of the blind musician Moondog (recorded on Columbia records in 1970 - MS 7335) plays against the image of a basketball player. The music is beautiful but in this context gratuitous; the slow-motion photography is not only hackneyed in style but hasn't been put to good use—the shots are too close, we can't seen much of the body motion that a slow camera speed may make to seem graceful. All we see is William Tepper (who subsequently plays the anti-hero lead character named Hector Bloom—are we supposed to recall Homer? James Joyce? or doesn't it matter?) who has a superficial resemblance to Dustin Hoffmann, and an equally superficial resemblance to Abbie Hoffmann and between them bears no resemblance to anyone you've ever seen on the *Wide World of Sports*. More inauthentic touches intrude—he has too much body hair to be mistaken for a pro athlete, he's oddly sweatless (an actor doing a second-take perhaps, not a basketball player in a gruelling work-out) and even before the credits are finished any but the most passive of viewers must be asking questions: why slow-motion clichés? Why Moondog? Were Simon and Garfunkel too busy?

I haven't seen the film's publicity material, but Judith Crist in *New York* magazine quotes Nicholson as saying in the studio's press releases, "I don't have a big truth that I'm trying to tell. I just try and relate honestly, to see the truth and convey it about a given situation the best I can." The "situation" in **Drive, He Said** involves four people principally: Hector Bloom, star basketball player, his room-mate Gabriel Reuben, drug-demented and spewing forth "revolutionary" slogans, corroded by his hatred for America, and Richard and Sylvia Calvin—he a fuzzy-headed intellectual (a straw-man as easily put down by Spiro Agnew as Jack Nicholson) she the fuzzy-headed faculty wife (another stereotype that is both derisive and contemptuous of women). Peripheral to this quartet, and their

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incomprehensible relationships with one another, there are blacks (awfully nice people, better than whites in many ways; the sort you see in televisionland in *All In The Family* and *Julia*, not the sort you meet in Harlem) and student revolutionaries (who take over a basketball game in what first seems a spirit of menace—they have an assortment of weapons and turn the lights out—but which dissolves cheerfully into a good-natured, innocuous prank). Political activists are so well known for their sense of humour and fair-play that we can all be grateful that Nicholson with his tell-it-like-I-see-it ethics, has told it that way. There are excerpts from basketball games (more slow-motion), locker-room and shower scenes (in which the black members—no pun intended—of the team conspicuously exhibit their genitals to the goggling whites) and in one long, seemingly interminable scene Karen Black gets humped by Hector in the front seat of a sports car and has the second loudest screen orgasm (complete with cries of "I'm coming . . . I'm coming," which combines a maximum of horniness with a maximum of corniness) since her role in **Five Easy Pieces.**

The film is no triumph of taste over **Myra Breckinridge** or **Beyond the Valley of the Dolls,** but it cannot be so lightly dismissed because it does have serious pretensions, and occasionally a scene will occur (few of the scenes connect with one another, there is great discontinuity in the plot) that fulfils its potential. These moments are so far apart you could probably knit a sock in the interval (or exercise any other skill you've picked up in the dark), but the end, where Gabriel Reuben "liberates" the biology lab and releases an assortment of mice, frogs, spiders and snakes that scamper, crawl and slither across the screen, is well worth looking forward to (in addition to any other reason you may anticipate the end of a movie so sloppily made that even sound mikes descend into the frame from time to time).

It is reported that at Cannes when the film was first shown, audiences shook their fists, hissed and booed. Those that were still awake that is. It is a film which—if you care about human beings and if you care about movies—you will stare at in disbelief. A man may hold the human race in contempt and create—with inspiration—**Dr. Strangelove**; or make his aesthetic sense triumphant over sordidness and create **The Conformist**; but of **Drive, He Said** the only lasting impression is that mediocrity sure has a big, loud mouth. There was a time when going to the movies afforded more insight and pleasure than merely being brow-beaten by a bunch of nihilists and hopefully that time will come again.

John Hofsess

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Cannes marked its 25th anniversary this year, celebrating the event with opening-night awards to directors who had previously won at least two Cannes prizes. One by one they trooped across the stage: René Clément, Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, Luis Bunuel, Masaki Kobayashi, William Wyler, Robert Bresson, Vojtech Jasny, and Lindsay Anderson. It was like being back at school. Most visibly moved by the occasion was Antonioni. Fellini received his award with the breezy vulgarity of a television MC. Bunuel seemed lost in the private world of the deaf. Awards were also to have gone to Orson Welles and Sergei Yutkevich, but they were tied up filming. I suspect in Yutkevich's case the Russians didn't want him sharing the bill with Jasny, who expressed to us the hope that "one day the Czechoslovak cinema will live again."

Then Culture Minister Jacques Duhamel conferred the Legion of Honor, Commander rank, on Charlie Chaplin. The 82-year-old comedian, looking literally in the pink, was crying, and you couldn't help being touched, but you nevertheless wondered what a man like Chaplin wants with a decoration: he isn't a bureaucrat or a bought journalist. He told us he was too full of emotion to express himself in French, so was saying it in English. ("I don't speak that very well, either.") He brought the house down by borrowing Duhamel's cane (Duhamel had a bad leg) twirling it and doing his tramp waddle. But it wasn't Charlie Chaplin we were watching: it was Charles Spencer Chaplin, millionaire businessman.

Following are notes on some of the films I saw, beginning with the Official Section:

La Califfa. Italy. Director: Alberto Bevilacqua. Worker's militant widow (Romy Schneider) clashes with industrialist Ugo Tognazzi, a tough boss but *macho*. Guess what happens. It's as if Emma Goldman had gone to bed with Frick.

Beg (Flight). USSR. Director: Alexander Alov and Vladimir Naumov. Based on writings by Mikhail Bulgakov, this one was initially rejected by the festival selection committee, which backed down when the Russians kicked up a fuss. A Hollywood Thirties epic about White Russians during the civil war and their subsequent exile, it has exciting battle scenes and that irresistible Mother Russia fatalism. The cinematic equivalent of a good read.

Joe Hill

Joe Hill. Sweden. Director: Bo Widerberg. Joseph Hillstrom was that rarest of men, a lovable revolutionary, and it is probably true that he died for the sake of what used to be known as a woman's honor. We can never be certain, of course, and the transcript of his preliminary hearing has conveniently been lost. The film takes him from his arrival in New York as a hopeful Swedish immigrant to the moment when his IWW comrades are putting his ashes into envelopes to mail out of Utah. They hear music from a dance that is being held elsewhere in the building and they break off work for a while and join in. "Joe would have understood," says one. "He was no stuffed shirt." As Widerberg said at his press conference, if socialism isn't fun, it's nothing. Won a Jury Prize, should have won the Grand Prix.

The Trojan Woman. Director: Michael Cacoyannis. Out of competition. Two hours of hysteria and stilted English. Dedicated "to all those who fearlessly oppose the oppression of man by man." Filmed, of course, in Spain.

The Go-Between. Britain. Director: Joseph Losey. Less mannered than Losey's usual work, and the characters for once behave like recognisable human beings, because Losey and Harold Pinter, who wrote the screenplay, had the wit not to try to improve on L. P. Hartley's novel. The book's essence, however, has escaped them, and the result is a nice slick commercial movie, a treat for admirers of David Lean and Claude Lelouch. Won the Grand Prix.

Sacco and Vanzetti. Italy. Director: Giuliano Montaldo. God knows what the odds were against films on both Joe Hill and Sacco and Vanzetti turning up at the same festival, and as official entries at that. Montaldo, whose excellent **Gott Mit Uns** won prizes at Karlovy Vary, has done a workmanlike treatment of the affair, but he has rather flattened out his principal characters: you would never guess from this film that Vanzetti read Dante and William James. Title song by Joan Baez and the inevitable Morricone. Vanzetti is played by Gian Maria Volonte, reportedly for a mere token salary.

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A lot of people expected him to win the Best Actor award, but it went instead to the little-known Ricardo Cucciolla for his Sacco.

El Topo. Mexico. Director: Alejandro Jodorowsky. Out of competition. This came heralded by a sheaf of hippie literature touting it as the greatest film ever made. It isn't, but it's possibly the most revolting. Luscious photography, sickening images. Bunuel and spaghetti Westerns have a lot to answer for.

Critics Week, which in 1970 gave us **Ramparts of Clay,** had nothing to equal it this year. Screening conditions in the Salle Cocteau were as bad as ever: insufficient seats, no air conditioning, and no 16mm projector—the butchery performed on one of the Canadian entries, André Théberge's **Une Question de Vie,** would have disgraced a fleapit, let alone what claims to be the world's major festival. Critics Week chairman Louis Marcorelles warned that the event will not be held next year unless festival authorities agree to improve matters.

The film I most enjoyed in this section was **Trash.** I also saw:

Viva La Muerte. France-Tunisia. Director: Arrabal. The playwright's directorial debut has Bunuel's thumbprints all over it, and he is in fact even more Oedipal, Christ-ridden and given to sadistic fantasy than the master. But he also has Bunuel's superb eye for composition, unless the credit belongs to cameraman Jean-Marc Ripert.

The Directors Fortnight, the so-called parallel festival, screened about 60 full-length features, proportionately more interesting than those in the official section. For instance:

Quatre Nuits D'Un Rêveur. France. Director: Robert Bresson. A world premiere. Bresson's idea seems to have been to try to make an even deadlier version of Dostoevsky's "White Nights" than Visconti did. For my money, he wins: at least through the Visconti version I managed to stay awake.

L'Acadie, L'Acadie. Canada. Director: Pierre Perrault. An NFB study of the troubles at Moncton University in 1968 and 1969, with a lovely sequence of the defeated students singing Auld Lang Syne as they abandon a faculty building to the cops. Introducing the film, Louis Marcorelles said it was having trouble getting shown in Canada. When I queried him, he said vaguely that "they" weren't too happy with it. If so, it's not hard to understand why: the film demolishes official claims that relations between French and English in New Brunswick are a model for the rest of Canada.

Brother Carl. Sweden. Director: Susan Sontag. Has Geneviève Page, but within half an hour I was out like a light.

WR - The Mysteries of Organism. Yugoslavia. Director: Dusan Makavejev. Similar in construction to Makavejev's film about that poor girl telephonist. Documentary footage on Wilhelm Reich and his disciples alternates with clips from a Soviet feature film glorifying Stalin. Using a satirical switch process, Makavejev makes Stalin look ridiculous—as the great man and his flunkies parade through the Kremlin, the soundtrack jangles Lili Marlene—while the deadpan coverage of the Reichians reveals them as sinister in their fanaticism. Tacked on to this is a sad little story about a sexually liberated girl (Milena Dravic) who falls for a gorgeous Soviet figure skater and is rewarded by decapitation with the blade of one of his skates. This is more than political allegory: where sexual love is concerned, Makavejev is a romantic pessimist. A marvelous film.

The Murder of Fred Hampton. USA. Preceded by a short speech from Kathleen Cleaver. Speaking perfect French in a *pied noir* accent, she told us that the revolution in the States was coming along nicely: two policemen had just been machinegunned in New York. The next day she and some fellow Panthers held a press conference, so-called: a reporter tactless enough to ask what passports the Cleaver party were travelling on was told "You have no right to ask that question," and the atmosphere in his immediate neighborhood got a little nasty. Mrs. Cleaver denounced reports of a split in the Panthers as the invention of the pig media and gave us a rundown on the ideological backslidings of Bobby Seale, Stokely Carmichael and Huey Newton, the last-named described as a murderer. She said how much she liked the Fred Hampton film, which she hadn't previously seen, but I expect that if Hampton were alive, she'd have put him down, too.

Agnus Dei. Hungary. Director: Miklos Jancso. Hungary in 1919: peasants and soldiers, headed by an epileptic priest, mop up defeated Reds. No-one conveys better than Jancso the absurdities of war, the finality of death and the fatalism with which men let themselves be slaughtered. Humane values, as in his previous films, are represented by decent priests, dreamy, naked girls, and alfresco dancing. Mobile camerawork, almost arrogant in its virtuosity. In terms of sheer cinema, no film gave me greater pleasure.

Punishment Park. USA. Director: Peter Watkins. **The Most Dangerous Game** updated, with Uncle Sam as Count Zaroff. Under Presidential decree, political dissidents are rounded up, given summary trials and sentenced to long prison terms. But the sentences are quashed if they can survive three days in a stretch of desert called Punishment Park, on the run from a posse of trigger-happy cops. Brilliantly done in TV-documentary style—I had trouble convincing two Arab journalists that they hadn't been watching honest-to-God *cinéma vérité*—but Watkins rigs his case and inflicts on us the demagogy of the paranoid left.

In the trade shows, Jean-Pierre Mocky premiered **L'Albatros**, a chase story about a left-wing militant (Mocky) who kidnaps the daughter of a right-wing provincial politician as a hostage to get him out of France.

Sour echoes of **Odd Man Out** silhouetted in a police spotlight, the couple make love, but when they are gunned down a few minutes later, the man dies thinking of another girl, an unknown face he had glimpsed at a dance. For me, Mocky remains the best French director of his generation, which is that of Godard, Truffaut and Costa-Gavras.

Geoffrey Minish

ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL

Underground film festivals are proliferating in the U.S. like toadstools on a stump. Some of them have about that life-span, too, but the granddaddy of them all, the Ann Arbor Film Festival, grows bigger and more influential each year. It may be a beneficiary of the natural rhythm of U.S. independent filmmaking, by which films are conceived in the spring, carried through the summer and fall, and hopefully delivered to Ann Arbor in late winter. For whatever reason, this year saw the biggest birth ever—337 entries, of which 128 were publicly screened in a six-day marathon—and, in my opinion, one of the best.

Last year some veteran underground cinematists (who tend to disdain festivals) entered and generally fell on their faces. This year old-timers were easily best-of-show. **Cosmos** (6 min., by Jordan Belson) is a superb evocation of a sense of the mystery and energy of the universe through a combination of electronic sound, rich yet subtle color, and irregularly circular shapes of light that expand and contract. Light years separate Belson's non-particularized images and the imitations of **2001** which have sprung up in the last year.

Runs Good (15 1/2 min., by Pat O'Neill) creates a weird surrealist world by putting together natural and high contrast photography (of widely differing scale) in the same frames, further transforming the result by sounds bearing no direct relationship to any of the images.

Newsreel of Dreams, Parts I & II (14 min., by Stan Vanderbeek) creates a haunting balance between social awareness and pure visual lyricism by a masterful orchestration of filmic devices, with newsreels as the principal material.

Standish D. Lawder, one of the most truly experimental of those filmmakers who work almost entirely with conventional footage, has, in **Dangling Participle** (17 min.), taken sex-education movies of the late 1940's and, by repetitions, shuffling of clips, and the voice of an old-lady teacher on the soundtrack, produced the funniest satire of the festival. He has also moved in the direction of the flicker-and-vibration sub-genre in **Corridor** (20 min.), the rape of a hallway by a zoom lens.

In **Horseopera** (24 min.) Charles I. Levine has taken pieces from famous old western movies, repeating, re-combining, and otherwise altering them to create a kind of symphony that re-establishes the dignity that these old films must have had in their own day.

Last year at Ann Arbor there was a notable absence of social comment. This year there was more than enough, ranging from the gently melancholy suggestion of the dehumanizing effect of life in the city in **Natural Habitat** (18 min., by Ralph Arlyck) to the almost angry irony in showing ghetto life in **This is the Home of Mrs. Levant Graham** (15 min., by Claudia Weill and Eliot Noyes).

Canadian Morley Markson, whose psychological narrative **The Tragic Diary of Zero the Fool** electrified the festival last year, returned with a huge (110 min.) documentary essay, **Breathing Together: The Revolution of the Electronic Family.** He has caught, frequently in historic situations, some of the most colorful revolutionary figures of the last few years and created, as it were, a debate among them on the question of means.

Sex had a sudden revival this year, too. One of the most beautiful of the films was **Lovemaking** (13 min., by Scott Bartlett), an explicit treatment of a sexual experience. One of the funniest was **Give 'Em What They Want** (49 min., by James A. Bryan), a cinema verité coverage of the filming of an absolutely disastrous pornographic movie.

Narratives, on the other hand, were few and far between. Perhaps the best of these was **Constance, A Love Story** (18 min., by Richard Bartlett), a comic version of the Lady Chatterley story, with a cast that seems to have been chosen at random in a supermarket.

The trend appears to be to longer films, but among the few short ones were some gems. **Navajo Rain Chant** (2 min., by Susan Dyal) begins with a view of a western mesa, partially abstracts it by high-contrast photography, then completes the abstraction by revealing its kinship to the stair-step pattern of Navajo art. **Ad Hominem** (3 1/2 min., by Peter J. Lawrence) plays havoc with the famous sick grin of President Nixon, while **Silent Majority** (3 1/2 min., by Bruce A. Ward) synchronizes a wordless melody of grunts, maunderings, and startled cries to a rapid succession of recognizable Americans—mostly old, fat, and sour—whose common denominator is that they vote the straight anti-youth ticket. Both films have a bitchiness that clears the system and freshens the spirit.

Edgar Daniels

Edgar Daniels teaches English at Bowling Green State University and has been on the juries of a number of major film festivals.

OVER- -looked & UNDER- -RATED

I saw the first 3 films mentioned below at Bob Huber's CinemaLumière in Toronto.

A Drama of Jealousy (and other things). Dir. Ettore Scola. Originally titled **The Pizza Triangle,** this film is funny and other things: satirical, sad, political, dramatic. It succeeds on all its levels. Who the hell is Ettore Scola?

A Walk with Love and Death. Dir. John Huston. I've never cared much for Huston's early work (I don't like **The Maltese Falcon** nearly as much as the films Bogart made with Hawks), but in his last four films (**Reflections in a Golden Eye, Sinful Davey, The Kremlin Letter, A Walk with Love and Death**) Huston seems to me to have reached a maturity that places him near the forefront of active American directors.

Burn! Dr. Gillo Pontecorvo. I think this is a much more interesting film than Pontecorvo's **The Battle of Algiers** chiefly because of the complexity of Brando's performance. (Those who don't agree that Brando is the greatest living American screen actor may feel that he's reduced the film to another **Mutiny on the Bounty**—but I liked him in that one too.)

The Neon Palace. Dir. Peter Rowe. Peter Rowe's indescribable 50's/60's trip has finally opened in Toronto to enthusiastic reviews and large audiences, but it still hasn't gotten American distribution. Watch for Mike Goodwin's rave review in *Creem.*

Joe Medjuck

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Hunting Scenes from Bavaria. Dir. Peter Fleischmann. A revealing exploration into the dark roots of human nature—prejudice, intolerance and aggression. It is all about survival and the fight for "normality". We are all in this one!

The Gypsy Moths. Dir. John Frankenheimer. A very sensitive film with Bergmanesque atmosphere and intelligent performances by Burt Lancaster, Deborah Kerr. Scott Wilson and Gene Hackman.

Jerry R. Stille

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The Abominable Dr. Phibes. Dir. Robert Fuest. The game of AIP Roulette has paid off again. This is yet another Vincent Price throw-away horror film, but it's one of the strangest, most disturbing examples of the genre to reach the screen in recent months. Fuest has slipped in elements of Kenneth Anger, Franju, even Feuillade—and the film works on secret levels of meaning that have little, if anything to do with the plot. Why does Phibes have a Hammond theatre organ that goes up and down through a hole in the floor? Can it be that **Dr. Phibes** is really about . . . horror movies?

Night of the Living Dead. Dir. George Romero. This is one of the scariest films ever made. It's also a beautiful, classically made motion picture—an impressive first film by a Pittsburgh advertising-man-turned-director. **Night of the Living Dead** has been out for a couple of years, usually playing midnight shows without much advertising. If it turns up anywhere near you, forget whatever you're doing and see it. (Pittsburgh freaks will note that Chilly Billy plays a tv newsman.) What a movie!

Black Shadow

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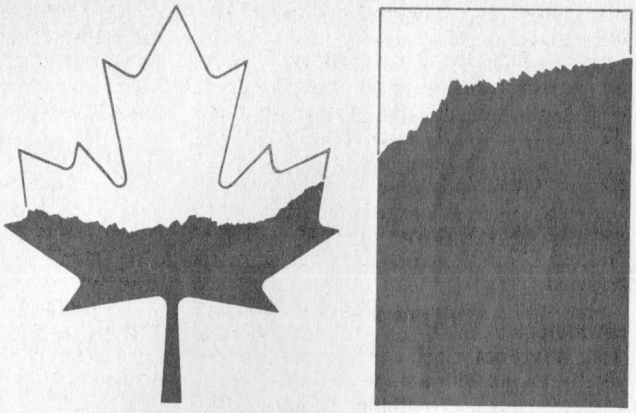
IN THE WORKS



Herewith, as complete and up-to-date as we can make it, a necessarily brief summary of recent Canadian independent feature-film activity. Productions that have (to the best of our knowledge) received assistance from the Canadian Film Development Corporation are indicated by an asterisk. (Assembled with the assistance of the Cinémathèque Québécoise.)

In the Montreal area, a number of feature films are in one stage or another of production:

Potterton Productions (following completion of **Tiki Tiki***—an animated feature directed by Gerald POTTERTON—and **The Apprentice***—directed by Larry KENT) have another project underway: **Godsend**, to be directed by Donald BRITTAIN starting in November.

Pierre HAREL has completed shooting of **Bulldozer**—the story of twenty-odd people who live in an abandoned mine near Rouyn—for release this fall or winter.

Kino Productions have announced two new feature film projects: **Lies My Father Told Me*** (directed by Jan KADAR and starring Zero MOSTEL, to begin shooting in February) and **The Silent Village** (script by Jiri WEISS, Eric TILL directing a cast led by Irene PAPAS).

Still in Montreal, Jean BEAUDIN has recently finished shooting a feature for Cinépix entitled **Le Pacte** (The Pact), the story of a journalist determined to get to the bottom of the suicide of a friend.

John KEMENY (of Minotaur Film Productions) will be producer of a new feature by George KACZENDER entitled **Sun Dog Days*** to go into production this autumn with Paul VAN DER LINDEN as Director of Photography.

Described as "a slightly politically pro-québécois engaged comedy", **Tiens-Toi Bien Après les Oreilles à Papa** is soon to begin shooting with Jean BISSONNETTE directing.

Roger LALIBERTE is currently directing **Mais le Soleil Viendra Bientôt** in 16mm colour.

Cinak, headed by filmmaker Jean-Pierre LEFEBVRE, is currently involved in three productions: **La Maudite Galette***, directed by Denys ARCAND, is in the editing stage; **Les Smats***, the first dramatic feature by Jean-Claude (**60 Cycles**) LABRECQUE, has just completed shooting in the Gaspé; and **Ultimatum**, which LEFEBVRE shot in four days in June, is also being edited.

Paul ALMOND has been directing a cast headed by wife Geneviève BUJOLD and John VERNON in **Undersky*** near Tadoussac. Shooting should be completed by now. Meanwhile, Miss BUJOLD has announced that her next film will be **Three Days In October** (tentative title), a dramatic feature of love (written by Patrick WATSON and Laurier LAPIERRE) set against last year's October Crisis.

Also shooting in Montreal during September was René CLEMENT's new feature (tentatively titled, in English, **Cross My Heart and Hope to Die**), starring Robert RYAN, Jean-Louis TRINTIGNANT and Tisa FARROW. The French production will wrap after seven or eight weeks location-shooting in Montreal and return to Paris for an equal length of studio work.

And, to put all of the above into some kind of perspective, it has been revealed that the Quebec-made feature **Deux Femmes en Or*** (Produced, Directed and co-Authored by Claude FOURNIER), which cost a total of $225,000, has become the highest-grossing Canadian-produced motion picture of all time. As of the end of August, in Quebec alone, it had had a $2,500,000 box office, with release of an English-dubbed version not slated before November at the earliest. No other Canadian-made movie has even grossed a measly million.

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In Toronto, last month, Eric TILL was still at work on **A Fan's Notes***, starring Jerry ORBACH and Patricia COLLINS.

Allan KING's **Youth Film***, meanwhile, is in the editing stage (Arla SAARE editing). Shot in super 16mm colour (to be blown up to 35mm), the film is "about how some young people feel about their world, the way they act it out in their own lives—dramatically".

Still in Toronto, George McGOWAN is directing a 35mm Agincourt Productions film called **Face-Off***, the story of today's young people set against the worlds of hockey and music.

Tim BOND has been directing **Stop Me**, (formerly **The Babysitter**), a horror suspense story in 35mm colour produced by Roy MOORE.

Star of Don OWEN's **Ernie Game** a few years back, Alexis KANNER is producing and starring in his own feature film set to go before the cameras soon. **Mahoney's Estate***, written by Terrance HEFFERNAN and directed by Harvey (**Fortune and Men's Eyes***) HART, is a light comedy about a city worker who deserts his job for farming.

Don (**Goin' Down the Road***) SHEBIB is presently editing his second feature, **Rip-Off***. The film (with Richard LEITERMAN as Director of Photography) deals in dramatic form with some of the problems, excitement and happiness of a 17-year-old boy during his final year of high school. Don SCARDINO stars. (**Goin' Down the Road**'s budget: $82,000. **Rip-Off**'s: $290,000.)

Nearing completion as well is the Peter HITCHCOCK-John CARROLL 16mm feature **Get On to Get Off***, a "rock odyssey" produced by Barry ALLEN.

Crawley Films, meanwhile, has been filming (Richard LEITERMAN at the camera again) an underground Toronto production of **Hamlet** with amateur actors that was staged free in a midtown church.

And Ivan REITMAN, while waiting for his second feature (**Foxy Lady***) to be released this fall, has quietly gone ahead and (in 11 days) completed shooting a third film, tentatively titled **Cannibal Girls**, described as a "horror comedy". Distribution has yet to be finalized.

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On the West Coast, encouraged by a glossy promotional brochure and advertisements in Hollywood, recent Vancouver-shot US features include **Carnal Knowledge**, **McCabe and Mrs. Miller** and **The Grove**. More recently, Lamont JOHNSON has been directing George PEPPARD and Canadian Michael SARRAZIN in **The Plastic Man** (the story of man who escapes an explosion in a war research laboratory).

Amond Canadian productions, Tom SHANDEL has completed shooting (35mm colour) **Another Smith for Paradise*** with Francis HYLAND leading the cast. Producer is Jim MARGELLOS, formerly with Robert ALTMAN. This is the first CFDC-supported feature originating in Vancouver and is scheduled for November completion, and release next spring.

Continuing its recognition of West Coast filmmakers, the CFDC has awarded grants ranging from $4000 to $7500 to nine young people for the production of feature films: Doug WHITE, Don WILSON, Sandy WILSON, Jack DARCUS, Judy EGLINTON, Al RAZUTIS, Andrew DE LILIO RYMSKA, Andreas SCHROEDER, and Phil SURGUY.

Soon on location in Vancouver is the Toronto-based production of **The Ecstasy of Rita Joe***, directed by Darryl DUKE. The US production of **Brave New World**, originally scheduled to shoot under the direction of Peter HALL on the Simon Fraser University campus, has been put off to next summer.

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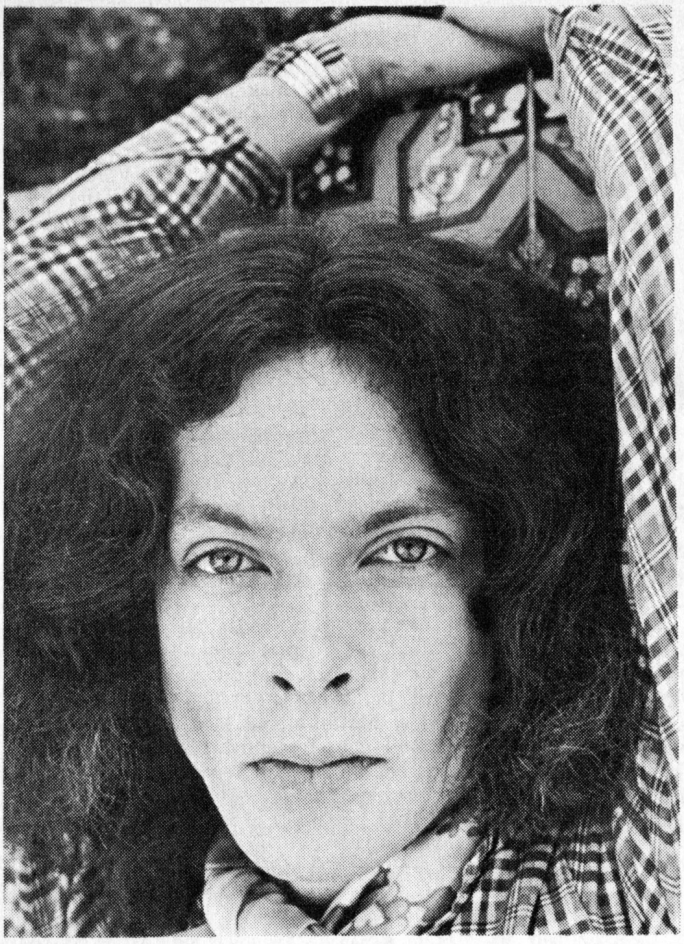
Elsewhere across the country, Gordon PINSENT is set to star in **The Rowdyman*** (which he scripted). The film, directed by Peter CARTER was to be shot in early fall in Cornerbrook and St. John's, Newfoundland on a $250,000 budget. Budge Crawley, through his recently-acquired Film Canada distributing firm, is an investor here as well.

And Canadian Norman JEWISON, now completing **Fiddler on the Roof** for United Artists, has signed to do two more features for that company. Jewison will co-produce both, but will direct only **Atuk**, to be adapted from the novel by Mordecai Richler (sometime TAKE ONE contributor) about a contemporary Eskimo and shot on location in Canada.



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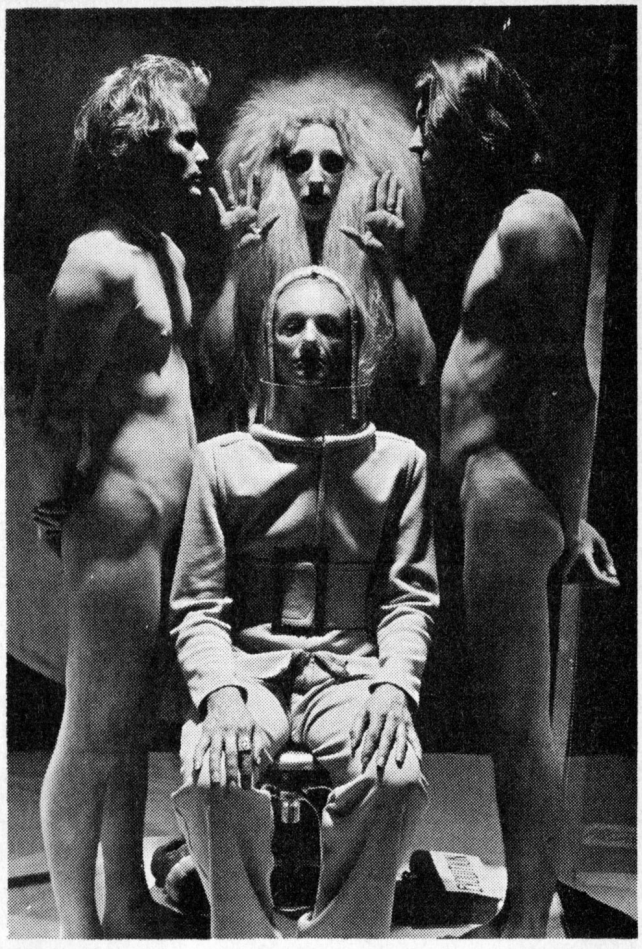

Steve Arnold, filmmaker

Left to right: Steve Solberg, Pandora and Ron Farrell

FRISCO LETTER

Paramour Films

The solitary eye of Horus, the Egyptian hawk-headed diety peers silently down a long, paper strewn, dust blown alley in the heart of San Francisco's Mission district. Its solitary painted form breaks the otherwise monotonous faded yellow facade and grimy windows of a former French laundry.

The symbol is the only break in the camouflage which hides the exotic artistry found behind the building's drab exterior. For once within the walls, only the merest flight of imagination is needed to conjure up the ghost of surrealist André Breton, the spectre of a Tibetan lama, the shades of Hieronymous Bosch and Aubrey Beardsley. They, and many others like them, exist as influences and guiding forces of Paramour Films, the cinematic outlet of Steve Arnold, a 24-year-old filmmaker, unnoticed and unnamed but possessing immense talent and unique creative sensibilities.

Inside, the abode is an imaginative fantasy-reality complex. It is divided into a studio towards the front and communal living facilities to the rear. White store mannequins stand in several corners, some dressed in bright scarves and costume jewelry; a Tahitian throne sits in Arnold's bedroom loft, dried weeds and colorful ostrich feathers adorn small tables, a stone skull grins from a pile of odd bric-a-brac.

Steve Arnold: shy, wispish, with long brown hair spraying about his shoulders; friend of magicians and clowns, of fire-eaters and fashion models, of actors and artists. With the help of a core group of 30 assistants who worked voluntarily or for low wages and a promised share of the profits, and some 250 "extras," he has recently completed his first commercial film, **Luminous Procuress,** a 90-minute fantasy journey through a dream-world cosmic bordello.

The movie centers around a madam figure, Pandora, who leads two innocent young men, Steve Solberg and Ron Farrell, through an elaborate underground brothel. In various rooms, alcoves and grottos, the trio views an assortment of carnal events, each increasingly anomalous. In the end, the youths become phychically liberated, free to seek personal sexual expression.

One recent afternoon while lounging in his loft, Arnold, speaking in tones that were scarcely audible, rapped about his film world.

"I don't express myself very well with words but with images it's really easy," he began. "I just don't like words; they bring it down to everyday banal reality and I like to take 'it' way off beyond that." Just what 'it' is never is quite clear precisely because 'it' seems to be one of those subjective states of consciousness which can't be tucked away into verbal constructs.

"In the guise of costumes and makeup and sets, you can really put a lot of things in. That's what really excites me, how you can get into people's heads and turn them around," he said.

"And they'll never forget those images. People will come up and tell me they still think about a certain image in my films and it blows my mind; the power cinema has. It goes right into people's subconscious minds, intuitively they really feel what's going on. My films are a language you understand intuitively because they're a completely visual trip."

Arnold's previous films include

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Messages, Messages, which was shown at the Cannes Festival Directors' Fortnight and then at the Cinémathèque Français in Paris; **Various Incarnations of a Tibetan Seamstress, The Elements** (a bomber he admits), and **Liberation of the Mannique Mechanique,** an ethereal work resembling Jack Smith's **Flaming Creatures.**

Liberation was Arnold's first film, made in 1967 while he was a student at the San Francisco Art Institute. A week after its completion, his teacher and fellow filmmaker Robert Nelson screened the work at the University of California. After the showing Arnold received a standing ovation.

"It blew my mind, it really did," he recalled. "I started to cry because I never had that kind of contact before. I could never communicate with people so totally. It turned people on to my trip. They could really see my vision."

One evening's shooting typifies Arnold's dreams. The studio, usually dim and quiet, is well lit and alive with activity. The set crew has been working for several hours building a small stage, decorating it with balloons and plastic masks, painting it bright colors.

In the loft adjoining Arnold's bedroom, hairdresser Nikki, make-up artist Koelle and costume designer Scott Runyan attend to their charges, gaily adorning them in ribbons and feathers, in masks and decorative headpieces, in exotic, resplendent attire. While everyone is busy, Arnold wanders among them, exchanging words of encouragement and enthusiasm.

The preparations take several hours. When finished, twelve persons are clothed in mad array. One is nude except for a sequined genital pouch, elbow length black gloves and a black net over his ghostly white face. Another has a green chiffon headpiece encircling her head. Nude to the waist with painted breasts, her silken skirt is open in front.

The tableau calls for the actors to cross the stage in a mechanical manner as if they were figurines on a music box. A San Francisco clown, Raggedy Robin, plays a calliope as they shuffle in a stilted fashion. Six takes later Arnold is satisfied and everyone begins to clean up. About 70 man-hours of work have been reduced to 30 seconds of art.

Luminous Procuress was shot in six weeks for a cost of about $15,000. Filmed in 16 millimeter, Arnold plans to blow it up to 35mm for commercial distribution. Production would have been virtually impossible without the help of dedicated assistants and the numerous extras, many of whom consider the filmmaking process to be an extensive mechanism for personal development.

Solberg says, "In the collective experience of making a film, there are radical growth processes, radical evolution. It's hard to define because when you're in the act of becoming you have to let loose your old definitions in order to make new ones."

And Pandora adds, "I feel it's a conscious effort of observation for each individual person . . . the majority of the people working on this film are working toward the same goal: liberation of the Self. There's a fantastic amount of energy and magic that comes together here. The genius of Steve is from a point that most people don't see. He has the quality of bringing different forms of energy together in a very humble way."

But behind the artistry and the humility, away from the art of forgotten religions and dead cultures, lies another incentive for working on the film: a flash of mischief, a child's delight at challenging convention, or as Solberg puts it, "We want to jolt people out of their reality structures."

Hal Aigner

REFLEC-TIONS ON THE CURRENT SCENE

by HERMAN G. WEINBERG

All is grist to the movie mills but all is not nourishing bread baked from that grain. There is little nourishment from **Death in Venice,** a valiant attempt by Visconti to do the all but impossible, to transmute that very spiritual novella of Thomas Mann onto the screen in terms of a catch-all commercial film. You can no more do that than you can film **The Magic Mountain** of Mann, though that isn't stopping one Peter Zadek in West Germany from undertaking that foolhardy task (to be filmed in German and English versions, it is said). The immediate difference between the story as Dr. Mann tells it and the film as Visconti directed it is that the story contains a whole life and the film relates only an anecdote, a passing incident. Visconti can only make tactile what is corporeal in the novella (and not even all of that, just the most obvious things and the easiest managed) but the inner self of Aschenbach, the interior monologues, the thought processes, through which we learn to know him as he makes his belated and fatal trip to Venice for a holiday from his work, this is not vouchsafed us and yet this is everything. It is a story of two secrets: the disease that the sickened city, "the fallen Queen of the Seas", is hiding for gain and Aschenbach's passion for a fair youth he chances to see on the Lido beach, which keeps him there against his first better judgment. But for all of Visconti's visuals, where is "the faintly rotten scent of swamp and sea" of the canals which makes Aschenbach ill, where is the hot wind of the sirocco which enervates him, where is the odor of disinfectant (though we do see the fires against the plague), where is the "water slapped gurgling against wood and stone" and the reflections of ancient blazons of the palazzi in the water? In short, where is the decay and sense of decay under the surface glitter of this dowager city on the Adriatic? As for his bewildering encounter with Tadzio (whom he glimpses only from afar and they never speak), it is almost an echo of Salome's ecstatic lament to the head of

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POSTERS
PRESS BOOKS
STILLS * FILM SCRIPTS

Jokanaan in the final scene of Wilde's tragedy: "Well I know thou wouldst have loved me, and the mystery of love is greater than the mystery of death."

For Aschenbach it was that. He, too, had an appointment with Death in Samarra, an appointment which he keeps, even though momentarily (when he is apprised confidentially by the hotel manager that the city is, indeed, sick) he almost escapes it. But he stays. "Perchance it was the taste of love," says Salome in her threnody to Jokanaan's head. "They say that love hath a bitter taste." And they find the tired old man on the beach, slumped in his chair, and take him away.

It is a beautiful story and the prose with which it is told is of the most elegant (they certainly don't write like that anymore). Although the tale was written in 1911, Visconti sets it around 1904 so that he can limn his turn of the century fashions more vividly and, indeed, his visuals are often, as a result, quite handsome. And the purely Italianate aspects are first rate, like the ebullient gentleman Aschenbach encounters on the ferry to the city and the strolling musicians later—the faces here are absolutely right, this is something Visconti understands, and so it rings true. But the film cannot risk what the novella dares, for instance, that Tadzio, for all his preternatural beauty, has bad teeth. Mann knows what he is doing and if Visconti knows, for doubtless he is an intelligent man to risk doing this story in the first place (how many would?), he is afraid and he cannot risk it. Mann keeps reiterating, through Aschenbach, that Tadzio will not live long and he is almost glad of that . . . . None of this is in the film . . . nothing really is in the film, save some handsome surfaces, those Italian faces, and the valiant performance by Dirk Bogarde as Aschenbach. He is too young, of course, and acts the part rather than feels it, but that isn't his fault. I heard a surprising suggestion apropos that Visconti, himself, should have played Aschenbach. I agree. (Just as I always thought that John Huston, who directed **Moby Dick,** however ineffectually also, should have played, with that craggy face of his, the demonic Captain Ahab.)

There is something about Venice and there has been for some time, now . . . the gentleman in Ivan Bunin's **The Gentleman from San Francisco,** you will recall, also made a belated pleasure trip with his wife and daughter to Venice and died there, as did Diaghilev, and Stravinsky was taken there for burial. Byron says it somewhere, "Italia! Oh Italia! thou who hast the fatal gift of beauty . . ."

LETTER FROM N.Y.C.

BOB COWAN

In my last column, I spoke about the Anthology Film Archives. Three other worthwhile showcases exist in New York for the showing of the independent and personal film: The New American Filmmakers Series at the Whitney Museum, The Film Forum, and The Millennium Film Workshop. (I should also mention the Ciné-Probe series at the Museum of Modern Art. Their programs however do not deal solely with the "underground" film.) The Whitney, the Film Forum and Millennium all do a good job, but the most comprehensive in terms of services to the filmmaker, and the longest running of the three, is the Millennium Film Workshop.

As for the original Cinémathèque, begun under Jonas Mekas, as of this writing they are no longer functioning. The Cinémathèque has a history of surviving in short ambitious spurts, dying out and then moving on to new quarters. The last series of their screenings at the Jewish Museum became more and more uninspired for, concurrently, smaller and smaller audiences. In any case Millennium has achieved what the Cinémathèque in its beginnings set out to do—but never was able to sustain or develop—that is, achieve a workshop setup where well-attended showings of individual filmmakers (with every variety of cinematic approach) could be presented. Well known filmmakers and lesser known ones are given equal exposure at Millennium.

Millennium began in the fall of 1966 under the direction of filmmaker Ken Jacobs, as part of the St. Marks Church Arts Project on the lower east side of New York city. About March of 1967, Millennium broke its ties with the Church after some rather unpleasant upheavals and became completely independent. After moving around to several locations, Millennium finally settled down in its present location at 46 Great Jones Street.

With the Cinémathèque out of business at this point, Millennium became the only showcase for the independent avant-garde cinema. Howard Guttenplan, the new director of Millennium, managed to pull every aspect of the organization together and keep it going. The best thing that happened was that he was able to put together a balanced series of film showings reflecting the different viewpoints and attitudes of many creative film artists. Millennium managed to survive, when grants ran out, on monthly workshop classes, membership dues and a 50% take at the gate for film showings. In September of 1970, Millennium received a grant of $15,500 from the New York State Council on the Arts with $4000 earmarked for the Personal Cinema showings.

Millennium's workshops consist of courses on basic filmmaking, production and editing, animation and use of equipment for shooting, editing and screening. A $10 per month fee gives one access to all workshops, lectures and use of all equipment. They also hope to put together, in the future, a Filmmakers Shopping Guide. This will be a comprehensive listing of recommended and not recommended places to get various types of film equipment and services.

There is nothing like Millennium elsewhere in New York and they deserve all the support they can get. For further information about donations, showings, etc., write Howard Guttenplan. Millennium Film Workshop. 46 Great Jones St., N.Y., N.Y. 10002.

Bob Cowan is a prize-winning Canadian filmmaker now living and working in New York City.

PARIS LETTER

GEOFFREY MINISH

The Studio Marigny, a Champs-Elysées art house, ran a three-week season late last winter of National Film Board features. Screened were: **The Ernie Game, Don't Let the Angels Fall, Les Voitures d'Eau, Un Pays Sans Bon Sens, YUL 871, La Vie Heureuse de Léopold Z, Saint Denis Dans Le Temps, Mon Amie Pierrette, Jusqu'au Coeur** and **Où Etes-Vous Donc?** Two of the directors, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre and Pierre Perrault, were interviewed in *Le Monde:*

Perrault: "It is impossible for a Québécois to be a Canadian. From the moment you start making films rooted in the Quebec cultural context, you can only make films which deal with the community and which try to reflect our position in relation to the rest of the world . . ."

Lefebvre: "What is very serious is that the Quebec government is completely uninterested in the cinema. The Americans unload on us a product that has already paid its costs, and the government allows it to enter. There is no economic structure enabling us to show our films—no one believes in them, no one is ready to take risks."

Perrault: "My films don't exist in the overall Canadian context because one doesn't learn the *servant*'s language. English Canadians don't want to hear it spoken. I made **Un Pays Sans Bon Sens** for the English section of the National Film Board. They didn't translate it."

Lefebvre: " . . . Remember those nice NFB documentaries with beautiful photography showing Canada as a great country where everyone is happy and the races mix? It was lying political propaganda."

Another Paris daily, *Combat,* has carried one of Henri Langlois' rare public statements, a blast against *auteur* and "mannerist" (self-conscious, arty-crafty) directors.

"The *auteur* cinema," said Langlois, "is closely linked with periods of decline: neither Sjöström nor Stiller pretended to be film *auteurs.* Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné were content to direct **La Chienne** and **Drôle de Drame, Une Partie de Campagne** and **Le Jour Se Lève, La Règle du Jeu** and **Les Enfants du Paradis** without playing the heavy thinker . . .

"The cinema has deserted the popular audience, just as painting at the end of the 16th century ceased being a fresco for the people and became something for the connoisseur's study. It was the connoisseurs who ruined Rembrandt and, very likely, Vermeer. Their taste was for those painters who bore us so in museums . . . What seems to be the characteristic of the recent period of

Geoffrey Minish is a Canadian freelance journalist based in Paris.

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cinema-as-art is that everyone is playing Rodin's Thinker by donning the mask of antique tragedy or of a philosophy as shallow as it is empty."

Langlois, in short, goes to the movies to be entertained, which is fair enough, although as dogma no more defensible than the hippie Zhdanovism of a Jonas Mekas. He furthermore confuses matters by excepting Godard as "a genius who has turned his back on mannerism." When, exactly? In **Wind From the East,** with its sorry-folks-the-film-is-jammed opening shot? In **Pravda,** with its corny symbolic rose? It's as well Langlois adopts the magpie technique in collecting for the Cinémathèque and doesn't rely on his own taste.

The kind of thing Langlois disapproves of is exemplified by the Franco-Canadian production **Les Stances à Sophie,** which has just concluded its first Paris run, to modest box office returns. An attempt to cash in on Women's Lib (or as depicted here, Women's Liz) the film has been directed by Israeli Moshe Mizrahi in a style that swings between the flashy and the drab, although "style" is a misnomer, being a quality Mizrahi conspicuously lacks. This one not even Bernadette Lafont can save. Better luck next time, Saroy Films (Toronto).

The long-simmering feud between *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif* boiled over in *Positif*'s February issue, which ran a letter from the *Cahiers* editorial staff attacking one of *Positif's* editors, film director Robert Benayoun. The basic argument is political: *Positif* is *gauchiste* (anarchist/Trotskyist) and accuses *Cahiers* (Marxist-Leninist) of Stalinism. There is also a good deal of difference in the magazines' style books: a factory worker trying to improve his knowledge of the cinema would get scant help from *Cahiers,* with its structuralist-Sorbonne Marxist jargon, but would find *Positif* generally free from jargon and in fact entertaining, often humorous, reading.

Invoking bourgeois legality, their right under French law to reply to an anti-*Cahiers* article by Benayoun, the *Cahiers* team accused him of "insincerity, bitchiness and smug incompetence." Benayoun's reply, printed in the same issue, began with a crack at the *Cahiers* prose style: "Luis Bunuel once told me he laughed himself silly trying to read what *Cahiers* wrote about him." Concerning the charge that he himself had willingly participated in the *Cahiers* critical ratings panel, now defunct, Benayoun said yes, he had, "for the pleasure of awarding zeroes to dear Jean-Luc Godard on his home ground." He went on to suggest that *Cahiers* was short on editorial integrity, quoting a statement by Claude Chabrol "diplomatically omitted" from the Chabrol interview in the Winter 1971 *Sight and Sound:* "*Cahiers* dropped me because I wouldn't feed the kitty. It's easy to tell who helped put *Cahiers* back on its feet financially: all you have to do is look in *Pariscope** and check the film ratings. Those to whom Comolli gives one or two stars generally own a share in the magazine." Benayoun concluded by urging *Cahiers* to stop trading on its past reputation, cut its bourgeois financial links and change its title to something like *Marxisme et Sémiologie du Cinéma.*

The Stalinism charge was supported unwittingly in the *Cahiers* letter by the admission that the present team got rid of Eric Rohmer as editor-in-chief because of his "regressive and reactionary policies." Benayoun's answer was that Rohmer might be "a rather starchy conservative", but unlike the signatories of the letter he didn't seem tainted with political *arrivisme.* In any case, he added, if Rohmer was ousted for being a right-winger, why did *Cahiers* subsequently publish a rave write-up on "poor old Leni Riefenstahl?"

*A weekly entertainment guide owned by former *Cahiers* publisher Daniel Filipacchi. Contributors include *Cahiers* co-editor-in-chief Jean-Louis Comolli.

BOOKS

When I first began to read serious film criticism I was fortunate (I now realize) to discover early on two of the very best weekly critics then writing—William Whitebait (G. W. Stonier) in the *New Statesman* and Manny Farber in *The Nation.* Whitebait, alas, is gone and largely, it seems, totally forgotten; Manny Farber is finally beginning to to receive the recognition and honour that's always been his due.

"Negative Space: Manny Farber on the Movies" Praeger, 1971, 288 p. $7.95 (In Canada: $9.75) offers a good cross-section of Farber's criticism over the past twenty years and a good chance to assess the range of his work.

Farber's important and unique contributions to film criticism are many. As a professional artist he possesses an acute, keen perception of a film's visual and spatial dimensions, qualities sadly lacking in many another critic. Long before it became fashionable to ape the *Cahiers* crowd, Farber touted the values of the unsung and unappreciated American "action" films and their directors. (See his "Best Films" of 1951 for some real surprises.) These were the "Underground Films" of their day, and fittingly enough, this famous and much anthologized piece leads off the book.

Certainly long before the French did so, Farber was seriously discussing Hawks, Siegel, Lewton and Fuller. Farber found art and style where few others did, and in the process helped revolutionize the taste and sensibility of many of us. Many present day critics owe a great deal to his approach and insights, but few can apply them as deftly and sharply as Farber. Farber excitingly communicates his own fine responses to film; his recognition and appreciation of the shaded nuance, the supreme gesture.

I'm sorry the present collection doesn't include more of the older *Nation* reviews, especially those of **Strangers on a Train, A Place in the Sun** and **Boots Malone.** These and others, plus much of Farber's art reviews, are collected in issue No. 9 of *For Now* (694 Chauncey St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11207) at 50 cents. Both are essential reading.

"Dwight MacDonald on Movies," Berkley

Glen Hunter is currently researching material for his forthcoming monograph on the life and loves of that luscious lovely of the Latvian cinema, Tatania Tatarnic.

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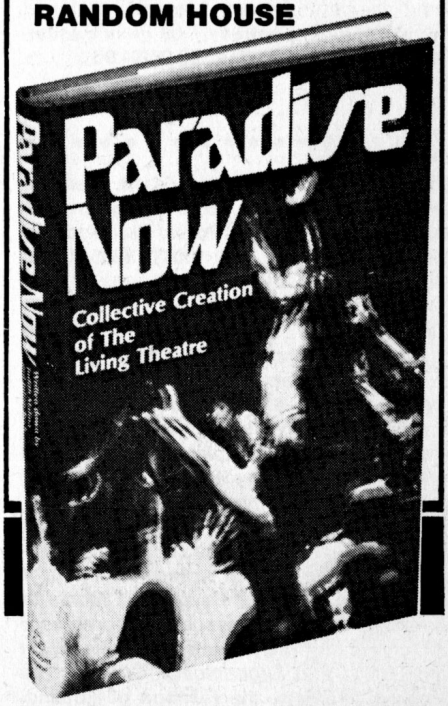

Medallion, $1.50, leads off a new series of inexpensive paperback reprints of collected criticism which deserves success. MacDonald is one of the real old pros, and his remark in his fine essay on James Agee, "his critiques . . . are usually more interesting than their subjects," applies, I think, with some truth to himself.

MacDonald has been writing on films since the '30s, and one of the most interesting sections here is a lengthy 1931 essay on the Russian cinema, peppered with MacDonald's crosstalk with his younger self. Splendid. MacDonald's "forenotes" are valuable in sketching out his position, and properly devastating to those who think films can be evaluated by rigid codes. Bravo.

As *Esquire* reviewer in the early '60s, MacDonald usually provided a rather abrasive antidote to the general run of accepted critical response to the milestones of the period—refreshing, if not always reliable. But what can one say of someone who gave as one of his reasons for ceasing film criticism the fact that he thereby would avoid having to see Losey's **Modesty Blaise**? For that sir, a round, rousing, boo.

Tantivy Press adds four new reference volumes to its useful *Screen Series*. Tom Vallance's **"The American Musical"** provides brief biographies and filmographies for 500 stars, directors, composers, lyricists, choreographers et al who contributed to the fashioning of that supreme genre. The only problem with some entries is that for stars like Paul Robeson, whose main achievement was in English films, the entry provides only his American credits—rather one-sided, but at least consistent. Fascinating entry under "Ghosting".

A few additions: add **Murder at the Vanities** to LeRoy Prinz's credits as co-dance director; **Greenwich Village** to those of Comden and Green, and Judy Holliday. The unidentified actress on p. 29 is of course, Ann Sothern. (Zwemmer/A. S. Barnes, 21s, $3.50; in Canada, $4.50).

Also in the same series: **"The Gangster Film,"** by John Baxter; **"Japan,"** by Arne Svensson and **"Germany,"** by Felix Bucher (this last volume at 25s, $3.95/$4.95).

Glen Hunter

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Close Up (1927-1933) Vols. 1-10, Geneva, London. 10 volumes, 5,264 pages, 1422 illustrations. The Arno Press, 330 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. $245.00 the set. $27.50 per volume.

It took 38 years for it to happen but it had to happen—the reprinting of **Close Up,** the forerunner and progenitor of all film magazines since, and after 38 years (and heaven knows how many film magazines) still the winner and world champion in the field. And heaven, indeed, is my witness that I should know, for in that interval I contributed to what appears to me now to have been most of them, either in the capacity of correspondent or as a free-lance writer. I don't say it lightly, for there is *La Revue du Cinéma* to remember, also, that fascinating precursor of *Cahiers du Cinéma,* and, of course, *Sight and Sound* and *Experimental Cinema, The Cinema Quarterly,* the *Filmliga* of Holland, the short-lived but memorable *Films* (not to forget the sterling contributions of Robert Herring to *Life & Letters Today* and Harry Alan Potamkin to *Hound & Horn,* etc.). Yes, they were many and ardent and memorable and two of the best are still with us, *Sight & Sound* and *Cahiers du Cinéma,* and still I say it, there has been nothing like **Close Up,** nothing that projected that "old magic" like Kenneth Macpherson's and Bryher's little magazine at a time when the institution of the little magazines was flourishing the world over.

"The cinema was still new enough to be full of experiment and light-headed with rapture over the new medium," I wrote in my foreword to this re-issue of **Close Up,** "which suggested possibilities enough to make one swoon. It was still the beginning (scarcely a dozen years old was the cinema in 1927 if we date its parturition from **The Birth of a Nation**) and beginnings are like first loves—there can never be anything like them again. That's the best thing about first times—their originality and uniqueness."

This "first time" is what gives **Close Up** its special enchantment, the first time **Jeanne d'Arc** of Dreyer and **The Love of Jeanne Ney** of Pabst were reviewed, and **Ten Days, The End of St Petersberg, Mother, Turksib, Storm over Asia, Pandora's Box, Westfront 1918, The Three Penny Opera, The Wedding March, Bed and Sofa,** and Clair and the Bergner-Czinnr idylls and **Nju** and the Allegret-Gide **Voyage au Congo, Rien que les Heures** and **En Rade,** Pabst's **Dox Quixote, Que Viva Mexico** — Eisenstein, Alexandrov, Tissé! — always them, the three musketeers of the Soviet and world cinema, **L'Atlantide, Vampyr,** even Roy del Ruth's Freudian and very Lubitschean **Wolf's Clothing** . . .

The mind does indeed reel from the riches we harvested in these pages. And how patrician was the writing! Read H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) on **Jeanne d'Arc**—where do you find such writing on the cinema today? Much of what passes for film criticism or analyses when not the purest gobbledegook is analphabetic by comparison. And not just Hilda Doolittle but Havelock Ellis contributed to it and Arnold Bennett, Gertrude Stein, André Gide, Osbert Sitwell, Dorothy Richardson, Marianne Moore, not to mention the film names—Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Man Ray, Potamkin, Oswell Blakeston, Robert Herring, Marc Allegret, Pera Attasheva, etc. All the while the illustrations beguiled our senses. When would we see them, the films themselves? "Patience cannot abide in the heart of a lover," says an Arab proverb. That's how it was then (it isn't that way any longer, is it?).

So here they are at last, the ten volumes reprinted in one fell swoop, that "old magic", phoenix-like risen from its ashes (**Close Up** having been out of print for years and individual copies being among the rarest of cinema incunabula). It is the keystone of any film library and if you don't have it you lack the richest fountain of cinema lore there is, truly the first cinema magazine devoted exclusively to the history, theory, criticism and aesthetics of the film and which serves today as one of the critical documents in the history of the motion-pictures.

Herman G. Weinberg has contributed articles to most of the world's leading film journals, served on the juries of various film festivals, been US correspondent for Sight & Sound *as well as* Cahiers du Cinéma, *and published several books on the cinema.*

Only the first volume of the five-volume New York Times Film Reviews, the one covering the period 1913-1931 can compare with it for sheer fascination of reading, and Arno Press publishes that, too, as indeed they do 48 more classic film book reprints in their "Literature of the Cinema" series ($510 the set), a publishing venture of such swagger as to boggle the mind. They are an incredible house, the Arno Press, and, for me, the re-issue of **Close Up,** complete, is their cinema crown.

A new, cumulative three-part index, consisting of author index, film title index and subject index, has been specially prepared for this edition.

Herman G. Weinberg

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American Film Institute Catalog; Feature Films, 1921-1930 (Volumes I and II). R. R. Bowker Co. (Order Dept., P.O. Box 1807, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106), 1971, 1653 pages, $55 per two-volume set (US and Canada).

Hollywood during the 1920's was an age of glamour, excitement, and transition. Rudolph Valentino was breaking hearts in **The Sheik**; Constance Bennett was scandalous in **Common Clay**; and W. C. Fields was starring in such classics as **Tillie's Punctured Romance** and **It's the Old Army Game.** Zane Grey was the leading literary source of the era—38 of his westerns were turned into films, and . . . talkies became a reality, with the release of **The Jazz Singer** in 1928. **Feature Films, 1921-1930**—the first two volumes of the **American Film Institute Catalog**—provides detailed information on over 7,000 features produced in the United States during these years.

Much of the material within **Feature Films, 1921-1930** has never before been available to scholars, historians, and film buffs. Extensive research was undertaken in compiling the volumes, using such primary sources as the Library of Congress copyright files, the archives of motion picture production and distribution companies, and the licensing records of several state and municipal agencies.

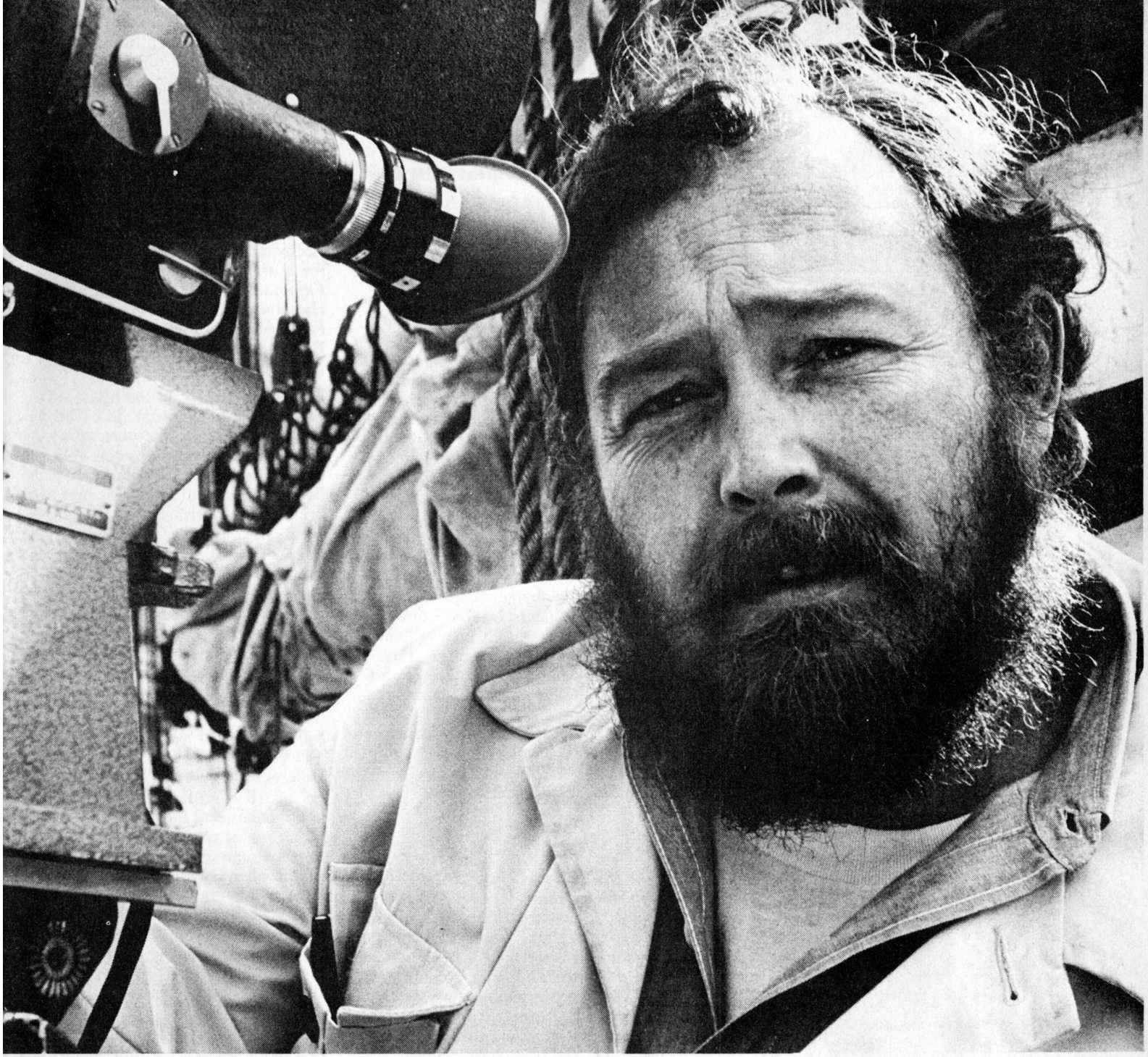
Descriptive data on nearly every feature film produced during the twenties is contained within Volume I. Entries, alphabetically arranged by title, include the following information: production company, date of release or premiere, cast and technical credits, genre (melodrama, western, etc.), literary source (if any), and a plot synthesis.

Volume II contains the computer-generated indexes, classifying the material by subject, literary source, and name of actor, production company, etc. The subject index catalogs each film by its substantive content, providing a key to the culture of the 1920's. (For example, 105 films were produced during these years concerned with alcoholism, whereas only seven dealt with the subject of peace or pacifism.)

Feature Films, 1921-1930 is part of the 19-volume **American Film Institute Catalog** to be published over a number of years by Bowker. **Feature Films, 1961-1970** will follow, appearing early in 1972. Upon completion, the **Catalog** will serve as the definitive directory to feature films, shorts, and newsreels produced in the United States since 1893.

Foster Stackhouse

arch 2021



"We weren't looking for awards ... but as soon as we saw the rushes, we all felt we had a winner ... and as it turned out, we were right ... I worked harder on that film than any I've ever shot ... maybe it's because I had more freedom ... the director trusted my judgment and used me as his eyes and sounding board ... we pored over movies and stills for months, looking for that flat, shallow effect in the images ... I used special lenses to capture the same kind of visual texture on film ... and we took no chances with film quality, either ... we used the total Eastman Color System throughout—from first negs to final release prints ... and this included Eastman's technical help whenever we needed it ... and it really paid off—not only at the festivals, but at the box office ... and that's what it's all about ..."

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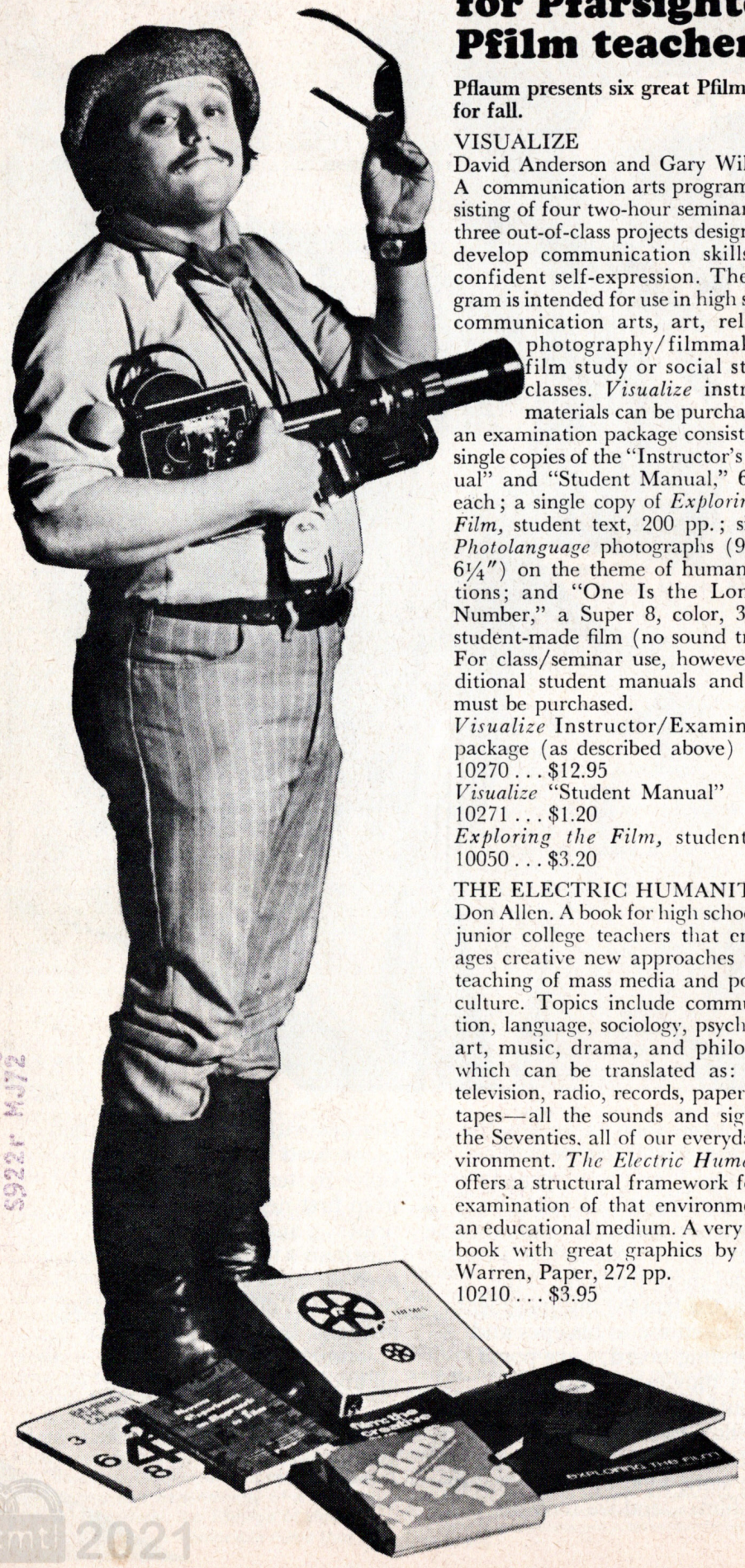
Pflaum books for Pfarsighted Pfilm teachers.



Pflaum presents six great Pfilm titles for fall.

VISUALIZE
David Anderson and Gary Wilburn. A communication arts program consisting of four two-hour seminars and three out-of-class projects designed to develop communication skills and confident self-expression. The program is intended for use in high school communication arts, art, religion, photography/filmmaking/film study or social studies classes. *Visualize* instructor materials can be purchased as an examination package consisting of single copies of the "Instructor's Manual" and "Student Manual," 64 pp. each; a single copy of *Exploring the Film,* student text, 200 pp.; sixteen *Photolanguage* photographs (9¼" x 6¼") on the theme of human relations; and "One Is the Loneliest Number," a Super 8, color, 3 min. student-made film (no sound track). For class/seminar use, however, additional student manuals and texts must be purchased.
Visualize Instructor/Examination package (as described above)
10270 . . . $12.95
Visualize "Student Manual"
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Don Allen. A book for high school and junior college teachers that encourages creative new approaches to the teaching of mass media and popular culture. Topics include communication, language, sociology, psychology, art, music, drama, and philosophy which can be translated as: films, television, radio, records, paperbacks, tapes—all the sounds and sights of the Seventies, all of our everyday environment. *The Electric Humanities* offers a structural framework for the examination of that environment as an educational medium. A very visual book with great graphics by Brent Warren, Paper, 272 pp.
10210 . . . $3.95

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Arden Rynew. From his own experience as an elementary school art teacher, Arden Rynew has developed a unique program for use with an entire class of elementary-level children (ages 8-12). This introduction to the "why" and "how" of filmmaking places the child on the road to a visual literacy that will serve him well in our electronic environment. Illustrated by the author.
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